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Security Council

Sixty-seventh year

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Monday, 10 December 2012, 9.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. El Othmani/Mr. Bouchaara	(Morocco)
Members:	Azerbaijan	Mr. Aliyev
	China	Mr. Li Baodong
	Colombia	Ms. Holguín Cuéllar
	France	Mr. Araud
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	India	Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri
	Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	Togo	Mr. Ohin
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. O'Brien
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

The Sahel: Towards a more comprehensive and coordinated approach

Letter dated 5 December 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2012/906)

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12-63637 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The Sahel: Towards a more comprehensive and coordinated approach

Letter dated 5 December 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2012/906)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Côte d'Ivoire and Chad to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Romano Prodi, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, and Mr. Antonio Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; Mr. David O'Sullivan, Chief Operating Officer of the European External Action Service of the European Union; Mrs. Saida Mendili, Director of Political Affairs in the Arab Maghreb Union; Ms. Ritva Reinedka, Director of the Human Development Group in the Africa Region of the World Bank; Mr. Yousouf Ouedraogo, Special Adviser to the President of the African Development Bank; and Mr. Ufuk Gokcen, Permanent Observer of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to the United Nations.

I wish to welcome the Secretary-General, Ministers and other high-level representatives participating in today's meeting. Their presence is an affirmation of the importance of the subject matter to be addressed.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2012/906, which contains a letter dated 5 December 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations, addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

After consultations among Council members, I have been authorized to make the following statement on their behalf.

"The Security Council reiterates its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security under the Charter of the United Nations and recalls that cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, consistent with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations is an important pillar of collective security.

"The Security Council reaffirms its strong commitment to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and unity of countries in the Sahel region.

"The Security Council expresses its concern about the underlying problems in the Sahel region and remains engaged in addressing the complex security and political challenges in this region that are interrelated with humanitarian and developmental issues as well as adverse effects of climate and ecological changes.

"The Security Council remains seriously concerned over the insecurity and the significant ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Sahel region, which is further complicated by the presence of armed groups, including separatist movements, terrorist and criminal networks, and their increased activities, as well as the continued proliferation of weapons from within and outside the region that threaten peace, security, and stability of States in this region and in this regard stresses the importance of the implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions including those with regards to arms embargoes.

"The Security Council also reiterates its grave concern about the consequences of instability in the North of Mali on the Sahel region and beyond, and stresses the need to respond swiftly to this crisis through a comprehensive and strategic approach in order to ensure the territorial integrity of Mali and restore its stability and prevent further destabilization of States of the Sahel.

"The Security Council expresses its grave concern about the increasing entrenchment in the Sahel of terrorist elements, including Al-Qaida in

the Islamic Maghreb, affiliated groups and other extremist groups, and its consequences for the countries of the region and beyond.

"The Security Council continues to be concerned about the serious threats posed by transnational organized crime in the Sahel region, and its increasing links, in some cases, with terrorism. The Security Council strongly condemns the abuses of human rights committed in the region by terrorist and other extremist groups, including violence against civilians, notably women and children, extrajudicial and arbitrary executions, hostage-taking, trafficking in persons and recruitment of child soldiers.

"The Security Council reiterates its strongest condemnation of the desecration, damage and destruction of sites of holy, historic and cultural significance, especially but not exclusively those designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including in the city of Timbuktu.

"The Security Council welcomes the initiatives and measures taken by the States of the Sahel, West Africa and the Maghreb, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Arab Maghreb Union, the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States, international partners such as the European Union and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the United Nations to tackle the complex multidimensional challenges facing the Sahel region but stresses the importance of strengthening transregional, interregional and international cooperation on the basis of a common and shared responsibility.

"The Security Council reaffirms, in this regard, the urgent need for enhanced and inclusive cooperation and coordination between States of the Sahel and the Maghreb, and among each other, in collaboration with relevant United Nations entities, regional and international partners, in order to combat AQIM activities and to prevent further progress of AQIM elements and affiliated groups in the Sahel and Maghreb regions and beyond, as well as to tackle the proliferation of all arms and transnational organized crime, including illicit activities such as drug trafficking.

"The Security Council recognizes the work done and efforts made by the relevant United Nations bodies, entities, relevant subsidiary bodies, and other international, regional and subregional organizations aimed at enhancing capacity-building of States of the Sahel and urges them to step up their efforts to provide, upon request, assistance for these countries in order to contribute to security and arms control and tackle transnational organized criminal activities and terrorism.

"The Security Council reiterates the need for an enhanced, comprehensive and more regional approach to the provision of humanitarian assistance to the food-insecure, conflict-affected and displaced populations in accordance with applicable international Law and the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance, and emphasizes the necessity to turn attention to the chronic structural nature of food insecurity and the nutrition crisis in the Sahel region, address the underlying causes of chronic repetitive humanitarian emergencies as well as strengthen regional mechanisms for early warning and disaster risk reduction.

"The Security Council commends efforts made by the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other agencies to provide assistance and draw attention to the scale of the problems in the Sahel as well as the support provided by countries in the region and beyond.

"The Security Council recognizes that the strengthening of State institutions, economic and social development, respect for human rights and the rule of law are necessary to ensure long-term security, development and stability in the Sahel region.

"The Security Council also recognizes the importance of a comprehensive approach encompassing security, development and humanitarian issues to address the immediate and long-term needs of the Sahel region.

"The Security Council welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General to hold a High-level Meeting on the Sahel, on 26 September 2012, in the margins of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

"The Security Council also welcomes the holding of the Rome Meeting of 7 December 2012 by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, which identified concrete and coordinated

actions to advance the resolution of the multiple crises in the Sahel region.

"The Council encourages the Special Envoy to pursue his efforts in order to coordinate the bilateral, interregional and international response and support for the Sahel region and to engage constructively with other representatives from regional and subregional organizations, bilateral partners and countries of the region and in this regard stresses the importance of a coherent, comprehensive and coordinated approach by all United Nations entities involved in the Sahel region and their cooperation with one another with a view to maximizing synergies.

"The Security Council reiterates, in this regard, its call to the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy to finalize as soon as possible the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel region encompassing governance, security, humanitarian, human rights and developmental issues as requested by Security Council resolution 2056 (2012)."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2012/26.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I thank Mr. El Othmani for organizing this important open debate on the situation in the Sahel. Last week (see S/PV.6879), the Council heard the presentation of my report on Mali (S/2012/894) pursuant to resolution 2071 (2012). I know that Council members are currently considering a draft resolution regarding Mali. But as acute as the problems there are, we cannot lose sight of the context of which Mali is but a part, namely, a sustained, systemic crisis across the entire Sahel region. What happens in Mali can affect the entire region. Likewise, we cannot expect to address effectively the issues in Mali, unless we confront the challenges affecting the broader region.

I am grateful to the Moroccan presidency for providing us the opportunity to discuss the bigger picture. The warning lights for the Sahel region continue to flash. Political turmoil, terrorist activity, drug trafficking and arms smuggling are spilling over borders and threatening peace and security.

Extreme climatic conditions and fragile economies only add to that toxic brew of vulnerability. This year alone, an estimated 18.7 million people have been affected by food insecurity. Over one million children under the age of five are at risk of acute malnutrition. The Governments and people of the Sahel region need our full support.

The United Nations has mobilized over $1 billion to support the countries of the region in responding to the immediate needs of affected populations. The recent rainfall promises a better harvest this season, which should help ease food insecurity. However, much more needs to be done.

We must strengthen resilience across the region. We know that building resilient societies and institutions yields big returns. It increases the impact and cost-effectiveness of humanitarian and development assistance. Doing it right will require coordinating United Nations system-wide efforts and linking the existing national initiatives to region-wide approaches.

Resolution 2056 (2012) recognized the need for an integrated strategy addressing all dimensions of the crisis. We presented a framework during a high-level meeting in September. I also appointed Mr. Romano Prodi as my Special Envoy for the Sahel, who will report to the Council more in detail. He is focusing on four key issues: security, governance, humanitarian requirements and development.

Let me point to just one area in the field of development that could make a difference. Earlier this year, I launched our Sustainable Energy for All initiative. With the right investments and support, the Sahel is ideally situated to be a global showcase for solar energy. Mr. Prodi is here to provide an update on our overall efforts and his thoughts on the way forward.

For my part, I call on the members of the Council and the wider international community to continue to support our efforts to support the strategy. We simply must not relent until peace and stability have been restored to the region.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to Mr. Prodi.

Mr. Prodi: I am truly grateful for the opportunity to take the floor before the Security Council as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel.

As the Secretary-General just said, the Sahel region is facing a complex and mulifaceted crisis. It is a crisis that may spread if not tackled in time. When

I was asked by the Secretary-General to assume the responsibility of being his Special Envoy for the Sahel, I was both honoured and frightened: honoured by the trust, and frightened by the challenge.

This is a challenge that we can win only if we are united, working for the same purpose. Our purpose is to organize a worldwide platform aimed at putting in action an efficient network of humanitarian aid and a common strategy for the development of the Sahel. However, nothing can be done in that respect without restoring the unity of Mali in a peaceful Sahel, immediately starting a process that will allow for transparent and free democratic elections as soon as possible. It is clear to every one of us that in order to achieve that difficult but indispensable goal, we need different ideas but common action against any form of terrorism or illegal behaviour.

After two months of my mandate, I see that there is now a common will to achieve those goals and that all of us share the belief in the need to avoid the spread of terrorism, now probably the most dangerous prospect facing the world community. This unity is not a common situation. We have to exploit it.

We are here in order to translate this common shared view into common action. This is possible because we can count on the strong cooperation of all within the United Nations, all the members of the Security Council, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union and all the main actors of world politics.

The mandate established by the Secretary-General was very clear when he summed up to me the scope of my mission, which was to coordinate the efforts of the many who already work very well along four lines, which are complex and different but closely interconnected: peace and security, political stability, humanitarian aid, and long-term development. He asked me to prepare an integrated strategy whereby the international community could work effectively together in helping the countries of the Sahel achieve those goals.

It must be clear that this integrated strategy cannot be an occasion to only write an elegant paper. It is a set of actions tailored to face dynamically evolving problems and aimed at bringing urgent relief in humanitarian tragedies, generating new trust among the people of the Sahel and attracting international attention with a view to raising financial and political support.

Key to the strategy is close cooperation among all those who are facing the Sahel challenge, wherever they come from. This is why, in the first weeks of my mandate, I had extensive meetings with the leaders of the countries and the African institutions most involved in this process, in Bamako, Addis Ababa, Cairo, Algeria and Morocco, and then in the European Union, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy. Then I called for a meeting in Rome at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations — which is so kindly and effectively hosting and supporting our activities — with all the mediators, special envoys and senior United Nations officials working on the Sahel. The purpose was to share our views on the evolving situation in the Sahel and to deepen the means by which the special envoys and mediators could best coordinate their work. The result has been extremely positive, and both coordination and integration are perceived not as an option but as a must.

After the Rome meeting, I feel that we are truly a large, strong international cooperation team. Next week I will travel to the region for the third time since my appointment. Special Representative of the Secretary-General Djinnit and I will travel together to meet key actors to discuss security, political, humanitarian and development issues facing the Governments of the region.

Clearly, our interlocutors cannot be only politicians. We have before us the whole of society, and we shall therefore open a dialogue with all its components: intellectuals, religious people, women, businessmen, representatives of tribes. We must listen and talk to all of them. The challenges faced by the Sahelian communities include environmental degradation, youth unemployment, water management, weak institutions, human trafficking, organized crime and terrorism. Those are just some of the immediate issues we must address.

To be operational and effective in those fields, substantial resources are needed. That is another difficult challenge, but I have been struck by the voluntary offer of quite a few countries to move forward quickly in order to meet the needs stemming from the Sahel emergencies. There are never enough resources in this field, and I am now trying to bring on board the highest number of countries, international institutions and private donors possible. It was widely accepted that the first and most important focus would be the people

in need, particularly those affected by the crisis and in dire need of assistance.

A meeting of all countries and institutions available to support an urgent humanitarian aid action will be organized very soon, following the Rome meeting, in order to mobilize extraordinary support for responding to the crisis. A multi-donor trust fund specific to the Sahel is also, in my opinion, an urgent necessity.

Concerning long-term development, I intend to rely heavily on people who have invested a considerable amount of time and brainpower studying the region and the challenges faced by its people. To that end, we have received generous offers from the best specialists in the world, from Brussels to Washington, including from the top American, European and Chinese universities and research institutions. We will do our best to take advantage of their offers of support. We must not reinvent what has already been studied and analysed. Of course, all such efforts would also involve Governments, civil societies, regional partners, non-governmental organizations and financial institutions. Long-term peace can be sustained only through development.

I intend to exert all possible efforts to mobilize what is needed. I envisage resource mobilization to take place in two phases. In the immediate and short term, resources would be required to strengthen the ongoing efforts and current mechanisms to alleviate the immediate sufferings of the people. The second phase would involve resources required to bring about some fundamental and structural improvements in the region to drive it towards long-term recovery and development. I will count on grants, loans, direct investments from multilateral institutions — the World Bank, the African Development Bank and so on — and national funds from the Gulf to China. In both phases, I will rely heavily on the support of the Security Council and the international community as a whole.

The resources we mobilize will never eliminate the need for good governance. We must therefore also place the onus on the shoulders of the Governments of the region and help them to take these matters in their own hands. For that reason, the African Union Special Envoy for the Sahel and Mali, President Pierre Buyoya, and I plan to hold in the near future a meeting of all Sahelian countries in order to talk with them about what they need from a strategy on the Sahel. All of that can be implemented only if, in the future, there is a common view among Malian leaders.

We have to make every effort to identify and support one, and only one, decision-making centre inside Mali. That is a vital point, even if it is not easy to achieve. Strong leadership is needed in order to negotiate with the north. We need strong leadership in Mali.

As a second step, we must help the opening of a political dialogue with acceptable — I repeat, acceptable — interlocutors in the north. For that purpose, we must act as important and indispensable facilitators, leaving to the Malians full responsibility for the process. Dealing with the entire Sahel, we shall also facilitate cooperation between Mali and its neighbouring countries.

It is of course our duty to work to put an end to any act of violence. As can easily be understood, the whole long-term Sahel agenda can be implemented only if we achieve the two main goals of the agenda: political union and the democratic evolution of the country.

Regarding military action, we must prepare it with the necessary instruments and speed; otherwise we are not credible even in our efforts to achieve peace. But we must make every effort to reach our goals — unity, democracy, humanitarian assistance and development — through peaceful means and negotiation. An extended military action always brings as consequences not only a humanitarian tragedy but enormous financial costs and an extended period of economic crisis. As far as timing is concerned, I have simply taken note from all the experts I have met that many months are needed to gather the strength requested for a credible full-range action.

As for elections, they must take place as soon as possible, and we should start the necessary technical preparation for them immediately. My point, drawn from my many previous experiences, particularly within the European Union, is that we must prepare them well, guarantee a free and transparent campaign and simply avoid having an election in a divided country being interpreted as sealing the division. In any event, if we want to reach the goal of a united and peaceful country, we have to understand that the tensions between south and north are not a problem of today but are decades old.

A platform of decentralization is therefore needed — a platform that, while preserving the unity of Mali, would make possible a credible change in the relations between north and south. How much decentralization is needed will be decided by the direct

Malian negotiators. I would emphasize that only the strong engagement of the international community can guarantee a positive outcome of that effort.

The situation in Mali presents a challenge that can potentially affect the entire region. Our efforts must ensure that what has happened in Mali does not spread to the entire Sahel. Accordingly, I would like to echo the views of the Secretary-General that any military effort in Mali must be undertaken after careful analysis and thorough preparation and that those efforts should be part of an agreed political process that tackles the roots of the conflict.

While the road ahead looks full of major challenges, I remain optimistic that, with the right tools and support in resources and organization, those challenges can soon be overcome. A failure should carry dramatic consequences not just for the region but for the world at large. The people of the Sahel have many hopes and aspirations. I firmly believe that we must help them to realize those hopes and aspirations, for their sake and for the sake of their future generations.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Prodi for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Guterres.

Mr. Guterres (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to express my thanks for this opportunity to speak before the Council. Only four days ago, we saw the entry into force of the first binding legal framework on the rights of internally displaced persons — the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, known as the Kampala Convention. A number of countries in the Sahel region, including recently Mali, have ratified this milestone African treaty.

(*spoke in English*)

That means tangible progress on the legal level for millions of uprooted people across Africa. The harsh everyday conditions facing most internally displaced persons on the continent today highlight the urgent need to transform those positive legal developments into reality on the ground. The Mali displacement crisis, which has significant consequences for the wider Sahel region, is a case in point.

Nearly 350,000 people have been forced from their homes since the beginning of 2012, many of them seeking protection in neighbouring countries. In a region where drought and prolonged food insecurity had already caused one acute humanitarian crisis, that massive displacement has now created another acute emergency. Almost 200,000 people are internally displaced, the majority of them living with host families or in spontaneous settlements. In the north, both the displaced and the communities sheltering them lack food. In the absence of State authorities to provide essential social services, they struggle to meet their most basic needs.

Insecurity continues to hamper access by humanitarian agencies, creating calamitous consequences for populations already drained by months of hardship. Protection concerns are growing in the face of widespread reports of serious human rights violations, from sexual violence and child recruitment to the stoning and mutilation of criminal suspects. With the individual verification and so-called level 2 registration exercises soon to be completed, the number of Malian refugees in neighbouring countries is now estimated at more than 140,000.

But, as the Secretary-General has observed, we cannot view the Malian crisis in isolation. It is essential to take into account the context of the region — the Sahel — which is facing enormous challenges that range from food insecurity to institutional fragility in some cases, and from widespread poverty to security threats in others. It is the Sahel in its entirety, not only Mali, that needs the attention and the support of the international community.

The countries of the Sahel are among the main victims of the accelerating effects of climate change. While drought and desertification are not new in the Sahel, their increased frequency and intensity are. That situation will likely worsen in the future as a potential source of conflict over scarce resources and a new driver of forced displacement. In that context, the international community, especially the countries that contribute more to global warming and its consequences, has a clear moral obligation to help communities build resilience.

Resilience is key not only to better preventing and mitigating the impact of natural disasters, but also for adapting to the slow onset of desertification and other processes that are destroying an environment capable of sustaining human life. The countries of the region — Algeria, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mauritania, the Niger and Togo — are to be commended for their

generosity and the unwavering commitment they have shown to the principles of refugee protection. All of them have kept their borders open throughout the crisis, despite the enormous pressure that has put on their own often vulnerable communities and scarce resources.

The refugee-hosting States need and deserve much stronger international solidarity to help them manage the additional strain created by the refugee influx. The challenges facing UNHCR and its partners in assisting displaced Malians in the neighbouring counties are also significant. Most of the refugees are hosted in remote, arid areas. It often takes several days of driving on very poor roads to provide them with food, water and medical supplies. In addition to access problems, insecurity, including a high risk of kidnapping, also hinders the aid effort in several locations, forcing humanitarian actors to move with armed escorts, with all the problems that entails. With refugee sites located close to the border, refugees are potentially exposed to forced recruitment and other spillover effects of the conflict.

Assisting a largely nomadic refugee population poses another set of unusual, complex challenges that require humanitarian actors to adapt their strategies for response in innovative ways that are better targeted to the specific character of those communities.

The humanitarian challenges I have mentioned are compounded by a number of complex, interlinked factors that make northern Mali, in the very fragile context of the wider Sahel zone, one of the potentially most explosive corners of the world today. As has been mentioned, an area bigger than the entire Iberian peninsula, from which I come, is now without the presence of any State authority and is controlled by armed extremist groups. The region's remoteness, poverty and vast, sparsely populated territories have made it an ideal operating theatre for actors engaged in highly lucrative organized crime, including drug and arms trafficking, people smuggling and activities linked to terrorism. That entails security risks at the national and subregional levels and beyond, potentially impacting all of West Africa, the southern rim of the Mediterranean and, ultimately, Europe.

To be sustainable, a future political framework must include, but also go beyond, the signing of agreements with those elements of the insurgency that are ready for dialogue. It must create the conditions for all communities, regardless of their ethnic and social composition and stratification — the Songhai, the Tuareg, the Arab-speakers, the Fulani, the Peul and others – to fully participate in a reformed Malian State and in the socioeconomic development of the region.

In that regard, the ongoing mediation efforts need full support. A lasting political solution can be reached only with the full engagement of all countries in the region and with a deepened and enlarged consensus at national, regional and global levels. There are many steps required that only the Malians themselves can take. But for their efforts to succeed, the international community will have to be fully engaged in an effective future development strategy that is fair, equitable and fully inclusive.

Poverty and underdevelopment, exacerbated by desertification and the effects of climate change, are being exploited by ideologies that are based either on ethnicity or on religious extremism. As a result, everyone stands to lose. That problem is exacerbated in Mali today, but we cannot forget its regional implications. If no comprehensive solution is found, the current situation risks triggering something much broader – a series of interlinked crises from Libya to Nigeria and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Aden, thereby threatening the security and the stability of several countries. The humanitarian consequences of such a scenario would be unpredictable. I trust the Security Council to do everything possible to prevent that from happening.

We find ourselves today at a critical juncture for the stability of the Sahel region as a whole. I would therefore like to end by highlighting three key points related to the activity of my Office. I hope that the international community will take them into account going forward.

First, Member States must give full consideration to the humanitarian dimension of the crisis as they consider the appropriate international response. Assisting the displaced and other affected populations is already highly challenging in the current situation. We should not forget that, in any military intervention, even when successful, tens of thousands more people are likely to become displaced in the beginning, both inside the country and across borders.

Secondly, I urge all actors in the conflict, including a potential international force, to protect humanitarian space and ensure that agencies have unhindered access to affected populations. In that context, the autonomy of humanitarian space, with a clear separation between

the civilian and military spheres of any international presence, is of fundamental importance. Thirdly, planning for the political transition and post-conflict recovery must carefully take into account those who have been forced to flee. For example, the electoral process must foresee such issues as voter registration of displaced populations, many of whom have lost their identity documents.

Similarly, future recovery and resilience strategies will be incomplete if they fail to include the dynamics of displacement. The potential for the safe and sustainable return of those who have fled is one key concern to be firmly anchored in any road map for the future of the region. Adequate support to countries hosting refugees is another, including, for example, the rehabilitation of refugee-impacted areas once displaced persons are able to return home. I am confident that my old friend Romano Prodi's efforts to bring about an integrated United Nations strategy for the Sahel region will result in a successful framework to enhance that support.

Once again, I appeal to the international community to show to all countries of the Sahel the same solidarity they have extended to so many Malian refugees while totally disregarding the impact on their own economies and societies. I again thank the Council for this opportunity to brief it today.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Guterres for his statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Koffi Diby (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I am very pleased and honoured to address this gathering on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), who sends his fraternal greetings. In my capacity as current Chairman of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers, I express our sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for December, and thank you for taking the initiative of convening this important meeting on the situation in the Sahel, which demands a rapid response in the areas of peace and security, humanitarian assistance, human rights and development.

Today's meeting follows up on the high-level meeting on the Sahel held in New York on 26 September at the initiative of the Secretary-General, which enabled broad consensus on the part of the international community on two points: first, the urgent need to support a United Nations integrated regional strategy for the Sahel on the issues of governance, security, humanitarian action, human rights and sustainable development, in accordance with resolution 2056 (2012); and, secondly, the urgent need for international intervention in Mali in the framework of our collective security.

With regard to the United Nations integrated regional strategy for the Sahel that the whole world expects to see in the next few weeks, it is important to note that particular emphasis should be placed on strengthening intraregional, interregional and international cooperation and coordination with a view to better addressing, together, the complex, multidimensional and transnational problems the Sahel region is facing. Those problems are the proliferation of small arms and light weapons; trafficking in arms, drugs and other banned goods; trafficking in persons, hostage-taking and the recruitment of child soldiers; the forced displacement of populations, whether because of changes in grazing areas or armed conflict and natural disasters that create refugees and internally displaced persons; the impoverishment of populations due to extreme weather conditions; violation of human rights and desecration of sacred places, including some recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage sites; and, to top it all, the presence of ever more rapidly growing, highly dangerous terrorist groups with large quantities of sophisticated weapons from the arsenals of the former Libyan regime.

In the face of all those threats, it is important that the integrated strategy be developed as soon as possible, endorsed by all and implemented — not only for the benefit of the people of the Sahel countries, of course, but also for the welfare of African peoples in general and people around the world who suffer in various ways as a consequence of those evils. In that regard, I welcome the appointment of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Sahel, former Prime Minister Romano Prodi. He has already set to work, paying a preliminary visit to many heads of State in the Sahel region and holding a meeting in Rome on 7 December to identify the essential concrete and coordinated actions needed to resolve the crisis in the region.

Regarding the multidimensional crisis in Mali, which represents a synthesis and culmination of the threats and ills afflicting the Sahel — a region that,

it should be stressed, includes several ECOWAS countries — I would like to reiterate here and now the urgency and diligence with which the Security Council should be authorizing the deployment of an African-led international support mission to Mali and the necessary logistical and financial support for it. I wish to recall that the request to deploy an international support mission such as the Council is currently considering was made by the entire African continent, speaking in one voice, including the Government of Mali, ECOWAS, which I represent, and the African Union.

Northern Mali is gradually being transformed into a sanctuary for terrorist groups engaged, with total impunity, in the worst possible abuses and massive violations of human rights. That terrorist presence threatens every State in West Africa and the Sahel, but also those of the Maghreb and beyond. We are talking about a real danger to international peace and security, which therefore demands a comprehensive and determined response on the part of the international community. That is why we believe that the deployment of an international support mission is so vital to help restore the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Mali and to end the terrorist presence in our lands. For that to happen, it is essential that the Security Council adopt a resolution authorizing the deployment of a support mission in the next few days. We must act urgently and now, because any further delay in its adoption is likely to strengthen the terrorists' position, and the price of their removal will be even higher for us all.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco.

I would first like to thank the delegation of the friendly State of India for its distinguished leadership of the Council in November.

Today the Council is seized with the question of the situation in the Sahel, in the light of the many major and long-term security, humanitarian, food and environmental challenges facing the region.

I would also like to take this the opportunity to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his personal participation in this meeting. We are also pleased to have with us today Mr. Romano Prodi, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, whose mission, under resolution 2056 (2012), is to prepare and develop an integrated United Nations strategy for the Sahel, in order to increase synergies and coordination among the various United Nations entities working on the Sahel. We hope the strategy will be submitted to the Council early next year.

The Sahel region is negatively affected by a number of factors. Besides dealing with such problems as desertification, poverty, malnutrition and famine, in the last few years the Sahel has become a safe haven for terrorist groups, ideologically and methodologically affiliated with the international Al-Qaida network, as well as separatist groups and traffickers in drugs and human beings that are a threat to international and regional security.

We should recall that concrete and specific indications of the existence of challenges that should be overcome began to emerge a few years ago, although the international community did not address those threats and their root causes or take or accelerate the measures that might have helped to block or limit the proliferation of such illicit activities. It was therefore quite normal that Morocco, as an old African State focused on the security and stability of Africa, would place that serious question at the heart of its concerns during its presidency. The Council should focus on this question given its historic relations with the region. We feel the threats being faced by the Arab Maghreb Union, to which we belong.

Terrorists, separatists and criminals have committed acts of violence on over two-thirds of the national territory of Mali. That constitutes a threat to the security and stability not only of Mali but also throughout the region. That dangerous precedent on our continent is a call to the international community, which is represented by the Council, to act swiftly to support Mali by assisting it in responding firmly and effectively to the situation. Any delay in the resolution of that grave crisis will only strengthen the stranglehold and control of terrorist and criminal networks on the region, which grow in strength daily, transforming the area into a base for and source of terrorism. We believe that it is vital to give priority to supporting Mali on various fronts — political, economic, security and humanitarian — so that the country can restore its territorial integrity and deal with all of the entities threatening its stability.

We would like to commend the efforts undertaken by the Economic Community of West African States to resolve the crisis. It is our ardent hope that the Council

will be able, as soon as possible, to respond positively to the requests made in unison by the African continent to assist Mali in fighting these threats. The international community should strengthen its support to States in the region to help them build their national capacities, establish effective security institutions and fortify their borders. It is vital to emphasize efforts undertaken in these areas by relevant United Nations entities.

With regard to coordination, a number of praiseworthy initiatives have been undertaken at the national, bilateral, subregional and regional levels, with a view to providing solutions to the challenges facing the Sahel, and this was already achieved before the Malian crisis. Unfortunately, those initiatives have not yet enabled us to deal with the problems in an integrated, comprehensive and coordinated manner. The time has therefore come to overcome those obstacles and to institute inter-regional cooperation and coordination between the States of the Sahel and the Maghreb for the stability of this strategic area of Africa.

The various organizations brought together here today provide an appropriate platform to lay the groundwork for the sort of interregional cooperation that would be effective in the Sahel. Such cooperation is needed to organize humanitarian assistance in a comprehensive manner and to focus on the regional dimension. In this context, we welcome the tremendous work carried out by various actors, in particular the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross, in addition to the various specialized humanitarian agencies on the ground. We hope that they will achieve concrete results for the Sahel and deal with the problems in a manner based on sustainable development, which, in turn, requires cooperation with the international community, including the World Bank, the African Development Bank, whose representatives are present today, and the Islamic Development Bank.

The mutli-dimensional and interconnected crises in the Sahel must be addressed through a holistic and integrated approach that takes into consideration, in a coordinated and synchronized way, all of the political, economic and social threats facing the region. These crises require the urgent implementation of measures because time is on the side of terrorists and criminal groups.

The Kingdom of Morocco participated in the Rome meeting, which allowed us to identify ways to achieve a comprehensive and coordinated approach for the Sahel, including the State of Mali, and would like to reaffirm its commitment to supporting the outcome of that meeting. We are committed to the security and stability of the Sahel, which draws its legitimacy and relevance from a commitment deeply rooted in our history and geographical location.

We reiterate our full readiness to support all sub-regional, regional and international efforts aimed at stabilizing the Sahel and West Africa in general. Our great hope is that the presidential statement just adopted (S/PRST/2012/26) and the ideas presented during this meeting will help us develop an integrated United Nations strategy for the Sahel so as to bring security, stability and development to the peoples and States of the region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

Ms. Holguín Cuéllar (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank you, Sir, for having convened this debate, which is both timely and extremely relevant at a moment when the United Nations is working to develop the integrated regional strategy for the Sahel and considering options to address the crisis in Mali.

I thank the Secretary-General, Special Envoy Romano Prodi and High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres for their comprehensive and informative briefings, which highlight the diversity and complexity of the problems affecting a region that is crucial for international peace and security.

The Sahel region is suffering the consequences of persistent structural problems, which have been aggravated since just over a year ago by deteriorating security conditions, social and political instability, a severe drought, and growing illicit arms trafficking, the exacerbation of various forms of transnational organized crime, and terrorism. All of this has resulted in a humanitarian and food crisis, and a growing number of human rights violations.

The dimensions of the crisis in the Sahel region call for an approach that gives due consideration to the particular conditions of each State and allows for actions to be taken that focus on the region as a whole. To that end, our work should be based on two fundamental pillars. The first is the recognition of national ownership in the search for solutions to the

various problems facing the Sahel. The second is close and coordinated work with regional and subregional organizations.

Colombia deems it essential that national authorities agree and define clear and specific strategies that respond to the needs and aspirations of the people, that enjoy the necessary support from various sectors of society, and that seek structural long-term solutions. We attach special importance to the contribution of regional and subregional organizations in addressing situations that threaten international peace and security. Such organizations have tools to build consensus and define strategies, as well as access to the interested parties and knowledge of the specific conditions of the situation on the ground, which makes them important partners for success in achieving the United Nations goals in the Sahel.

United Nations activities must address immediate needs, in particular with regard to humanitarian needs. We are concerned about food insecurity, the large number of internally displaced people and refugees, and the poor provision of basic services, such as health and sanitation.

On security matters, coordinated action that takes into account the size and permeability of the borders of the States of the region is important. Transnational criminal groups and terrorist organizations take advantage of border control challenges in order to act with relative ease. It is necessary to comprehensively address those challenges to regional security and to make progress in the discussion and agreement of mechanisms among the affected countries in order to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences, the establishment of common legal frameworks that respond to the specificities of the region, cooperation on legal matters and the strengthening of border control. Furthermore, Colombia believes that the activities of the United Nations and the international community in the region should seek to build and strengthen national capacities and institutions by adopting a general and long-term approach that takes all aspects of the problems affecting the Sahel into account.

Mali is perhaps the country in which the manifestations of the deteriorating situation of the region have most dramatically converged. Social and political instability; threats to its security, unity and territorial integrity; a serious humanitarian situation; environmental degradation; the destruction of its cultural heritage, and ongoing economic fragility are just some of the challenges that the country has simultaneously faced over the past year. The crisis has led to the mobilization of the countries of the region, which, as members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union, have called on the transitional authorities of Mali and undertaken a series of actions that have forged consensus within the international community.

With the adoption of resolutions 2056 (2012) and 2071 (2012), the Security Council responded to this call and unanimously expressed its willingness to support regional efforts. The urgency of the situation requires us to advance further along this path. Colombia supports the plan agreed upon by ECOWAS and supported by the African Union to achiev a two-track solution that favours a negotiated political solution for the restoration of constitutional order and for the advancement of the transition, and that, at the same time, seeks a solution to the threat posed by armed groups in the north of the country.

In that regard, we commend the work of the President of Burkina Faso in his capacity as ECOWAS mediator and by the core countries, which have made significant progress in establishing a platform for dialogue. As was shown at the high-level meeing on the Sahel region, convened by the Secretary-General in September, in general terms the international community recognizes the need for the United Nations to support this two-track solution.

Furthermore, Colombia believes that the recurring call made by the authorities of Mali, ECOWAS and the African Union for the Security Council to authorize the deployment of the African-led international support mission for Mali must be considered in a timely manner. While questions remain regarding the concept of operations and there are misgivings regarding the possible humanitarian and human rights consequences arising from the deployment of the mission, we believe that they can be overcome. We must act with a sense of urgency, resolve the pending questions and act to ensure that the leaders of the country and the region have effective mechanisms and resources to resolve the crisis in Mali and mitigate its impact on the Sahel.

With my presence at this debate, Colombia reaffirms its concern over the various forms of terrorism linked to illicit trafficking. The Sahel region has also been affected by this situation, and we therefore support the

international efforts aimed at tackling this phenomenon, which is continually on the rise. Colombia supports the regional efforts to develop a coherent, concerted and timely strategy that contributes to peace and international security.

Mr. Ohin (Togo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to convey my warm congratulations to the Kingdom of Morocco on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month and for taking the initiative to organize this important meeting on the Sahel. I would also like to thank the Special Envoy for the Sahel and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for their clear briefings.

The objective of this meeting, which is to explore ways of moving towards a more comprehensive and coordinated approach on the question of the Sahel, is very opportune, given the timing and context. The international community is today mobilized in various ways to find the most appropriate solutions to the many ills attacking the region. We are pleased to note that this debate is in accordance with the debate held by the Council on 21 February, during Togo's presidency, on the theme of the impact of transnational organized crime on peace, security and stability in West Africa and the Sahel region (see S/PV.6717).

Ten years ago, the countries and the peoples of the Sahel were perceived throughout the international community as being resolutely committed to stability, democracy and development. The progress achieved in those areas was favourable to its emergence from crisis, political reforms and economic growth policies to deal with the challenges resulting not only from historic, sociological and cultural hurdles, but also and above all from the austerity of nature itself. However, as a consequence of the burden and nature of those challenges, neither could the structural problems be resolved in such a short period of time, nor was the resilience of the people strong enough to effectively address the recurring shocks of food crises due in particular to drought.

In such conditions, it is not surprising that the region has become a breeding ground for many scourges, whose adverse effects could not be anticipated due to lack of wherewithal and resources. This state of affairs has jeopardized the progress made and destabilized the States involved and their structures. These scourges are transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking and weapons trafficking; religious extremism; terrorism and drought. The convergence of these factors explains the multidimensional nature of the political, economic, security, humanitarian, human rights crisis in the Sahel, and justifies the international community's mobilization, not only by reason of the tragedy emerging on all of the aforementioned levels, but also given the central geographical position that the Sahel occupies with respect to other regions, and especially given the impact of the crises on neighbouring regions.

In that respect, Togo welcomes the work undertaken by the Secretary-General to give the region an integrated strategic plan, whose principal objectives are to optimize United Nations action for the full resolution of the many challenges facing the region. Togo appreciates in particular the integrated approach adopted by our common Organization in the context of this strategy, which takes into account the complexity of the factors in play and the interwoven challenges to be taken up in the areas of security, socioeconomic development, governance, human rights and the humanitarian situation.

For our part, we are pleased to note that the strategies developed by the Economic Community of West African States and the West African Economic and Monetary Union include vital components that will be taken into consideration in the United Nations strategy for the Sahel. Togo hopes that the strategy will be adopted very swiftly. At the same time, the strategy will have the merit of taking the transregional dimension into account.

We also welcome the existence of the European Union Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, which stresses the fact that security and development are inextricably linked in Sahel and require close regional cooperation to allow for the growth of economies and poverty reduction. On that specific point, we would like to underscore two fundamental considerations.

First, we must not lose sight of the impact of the situation in the Sahel on the regions of West, Central and East Africa and the Mahgreb with regard to the food crisis and insecurity. The definition of priorities and approaches to solutions and their modalities for implementation must take into consideration the repercussions on the other regions. Those repercussions must be assessed in advance and must also be

considered as the programmes drawn up for the Sahel are implemented.

Secondly, we would like to recall that there can be neither development nor good governance without stability and security. As a result, we must at no time lose sight of that consideration. On the contrary, it must help to identify and deal with the underlying causes of the problem.

Anyone talking about the Sahel today is clearly focusing on what is unfortunately happening in Mali, while bearing in mind the significant threats to peace and security in the north of that country and the humanitarian tragedy there, with thousands of refugees in neighbouring countries. We need to reconcile the urgent settlement of the Malian crisis, with its multidimensional aspects, with a comprehensive approach that takes into account the entire Sahel region, which must definitely be seen as part of a long-term effort.

In that connection, we would like to reiterate Togo's serious concern about the situation in northern Mali and to call on the entire international community to consider implementing the universal principle of helping vulnerable populations. We make that appeal because there is certainly a conflict situation in northern Mali that is putting the people, in particular women and children, at the mercy of the abuses of extremist and terrorist groups, which are skilled in contemporary practices and prevent humanitarian access, thus sealing the tragic fate of thousands facing an acute food crisis.

The situation of those people calls to us to assume our responsibility to protect, since they are undeniably deprived of the necessary minimum to live in dignity. The duty to protect that we therefore need to highlight is justified by the fact that the minimum requirement for human security and the protection of people and property are necessarily closely tied to the existence of a secure State with stable institutions.

In adopting resolution 2071 (2012), the Security Council took a decisive step and clearly indicated its readiness to uphold human rights and democracy over darkness, religious extremism and terrorism, and to favour dialogue over force. However, the armed groups in northern Mali have clearly chosen another path, namely, to disregard human dignity. It is therefore imperative that the Council decide to restore hope to Malians, in particular those living in the north of the country, by adopting a new resolution that authorizes the deployment of the international support mission for Mali.

With regard to the Sahel as a whole, Togo is, for its part, committed to making its contribution as a neighbouring State of certain Sahel countries for the success of various initiatives, in particular by providing grain through the World Food Programme. As a country with access to the Atlantic, it already performs that function for the landlocked States within subregional bodies, such as the Economic Community of West African States and the West African Economic and Monetary Union.

Beyond general mobilization, the problems of the Sahel require particular attention. A mechanism that brings together all the relevant actors under United Nations coordination must be put in place. Togo welcomes the new appointment by the Secretary-General of his Special Envoy for the Sahel and calls on him to work together with the other special envoys in the region, including the African Union High Representative for Mali, in order to seek solutions to the many problems facing the Sahel region.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Special Envoy Prodi and the other speakers for their briefings.

We last gathered on the margins of the General Assembly general debate to spur international action on the deteriorating situation in the Sahel. Today, the international community and the people of the Sahel continue to face a complex set of interrelated challenges that threaten the security of the region and beyond. Serious tensions persist within and between the countries of the region. Violent extremism is flourishing. Terrorist and criminal organizations exploit safe havens to plan and carry out attacks and to traffic weapons and other illicit materials. The humanitarian situation remains dire, as millions suffer from violence and a lack of food.

Those problems are linked and require a comprehensive solution with contributions from a range of partners. The United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and the actions of Special Envoy Prodi are critical to mobilizing deeper cooperation among international actors, including the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, to achieve our common goal of a more democratic, stable, secure and economically developing Sahel region.

While the acute crises in Mali, which we have been addressing in separate meetings, are perhaps the most conspicuous problems that we face in the Sahel, as the Secretary-General notes in his recent report (see S/2012/894), they must be understood in the broader context of a deeply strained region. Although Mali's current predicament arises largely from specific internal factors, the country's challenges are reinforced and exacerbated by a range of transnational dynamics, such as region-wide afflictions, adverse ecological changes, underdevelopment, disaffected local populations and organized criminal networks.

Given Mali's delicate situation, we must be careful to address the crises in Mali without further destabilizing the entire region. More than 210,000 Malian refugees have fled to neighbouring countries and are living among communities already stressed by drought. Any military intervention in Mali must therefore be designed to minimize the operation's humanitarian and human rights impact. That is best achieved through humanitarian participation in the military planning process. We welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation in his most recent report on Mali that United Nations human rights observers be mandated to ensure that any intervention adheres to international and human rights law.

The rise in violent extremism and organized crime across the region has aggravated the situation in Mali. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa and other terrorist groups have launched attacks and kidnappings from northern Mali into neighbouring countries. Terrorists and criminals are extending their reach. That threat demands better coordination of existing efforts across the Sahel to combat transnational crime and the proliferation of terror networks. We can only tackle those threats effectively if, as many speakers have said, we work together.

The United States has expanded its counter-terrorism partnerships in the region to help countries tackle the growing threats to their own security. The Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, for example, is working on good practices for preventing and denying the benefits of kidnapping for ransom to terrorists. We are also working to shut down safe havens, cut off financing, and counter extremist ideology.

Considering the humanitarian situation across the Sahel, there are immediate needs that demand our urgent attention. However, international assistance that builds long-term resilience ultimately saves more lives and reduces the likelihood of repeated humanitarian crises. So as we work to alleviate suffering now, we must enable communities to mitigate and recover from shocks and reduce food insecurity. The United States has committed more than $445 million in 2012 to humanitarian assistance for drought-affected and conflict-displaced communities in the Sahel. We intend these resources to alleviate the dire situation at hand, to reduce chronic vulnerability and, ultimately, to promote more inclusive growth.

The multifaceted and overlapping challenges of the Sahel mean that we face a long road ahead that must include stemming the terrorist threat, fighting organized crime, controlling the proliferation of weapons, promoting reconciliation and mediation within and between countries, and responding to humanitarian needs — all while strengthening community resilience. This is a complex but essential agenda that demands deeper cooperation on the part of all of us on each of these challenges to lay the foundation for long-term solutions to the multidimensional issues that pose a serious threat to the peace and stability of the region.

We urge continued progress towards developing a comprehensive strategy for the Sahel that focuses the international community and coordinates its action to bring, peace, political stability and sustainable development to the people of that region.

Mr. O'Brien (United Kingdom): I am grateful to you, Sir, for convening this timely and important debate, and to the Secretary-General; the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, Prime Minister Prodi; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Guterres; and to Minister for Foreign Affairs Diby for their briefings. I am very pleased to follow United States Permanent Representative Rice, and I look forward to hearing more from our colleagues from the region, including the African Union, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, and the Maghreb Arab Union.

The United Kingdom approaches the problems of the region with respect, with care and with a clear sense of purpose. My Prime Minister, David Cameron, has asked me, as his Special Envoy for the Sahel, to convey his personal commitment to working with our partners here at the United Nations and in the region in order to tackle the challenges ahead. We recognize the responsibility that all United Nations Member States

share to help the people of the Sahel, working in full partnership with those countries most affected, for instability in the Sahel threatens not only the security and livelihoods of people in the region, but also those of its neighbours and beyond. Events in Mali have made that only too clear.

What are the challenges that we face? First, fragility exists across much of the Sahel, where, for a variety of historical reasons, States are weak, borders are long and porous, and Governments are challenged by the need to serve diverse and growing populations over vast distances and with few resources. Despite remarkable achievements over the past 50 years, many States of the region remain fragily.

Second are poverty and vulnerability. The Sahel is one of the most devastatingly poor parts of the world, with people surviving on the smallest possible incomes. These many millions of people are blighted by the lack of economic opportunity and unfair market access, and they are on the front line of the world's natural challenges, especially that of malnutrition. Food insecurity, compounded by political uncertainty, has led to hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and refugees this year alone, as was just so graphically illustrated by High Commissioner Guterres, who rightly urged us to give humanitarian action equal strategic emphasis, along with the political and anti-violence strategies.

Finally, there is insecurity, and the use and wider threat of terror, violence and crime imported from outside the Sahel. Extremism imposed in the name of religion in the north of Mali is entirely contrary to the long traditions of tolerance, diversity and respect that characterize Islam in West and North-West Africa. The criminality that accompanies it is also an aberration imported from outside, however much it may subvert and poison local populations.

For the sake of the people of the Sahel and the wider international community, we must get to the heart of these problems, and quickly, by addressing poverty, building resilience — as the Secretary-General himself so strongly stressed earlier today, citing his Sustainable Energy for All initiative as a solar exemplar in that part of the world — promoting political dialogue, renewing engagement with all acceptable interlocutors, including civil society organizations, and combating the scourge of terrorism and crime. Working in concert with the region, we must all share the responsibility of being the builders of stability, opportunity and decent lives.

How can we achieve this? We must show resolve against those — extremists, criminals, terrorists, kidnappers, destroyers of heritage, and human rights violators — who wish to exploit poverty and instability for their own ends. Nowhere is action more urgently needed than in the north of Mali. I welcome the work of Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and the United Nations to offer a political process to those in the north who want to work for a stronger, more just and united Mali, and to prepare the option of military action against those who seek to rule by hatred and terror. We must apply equal effort to both those initiatives.

But in focusing on the urgent needs of Mali, we must not lose sight of the needs of the wider region, where many of the same drivers of conflict are present. While others work to advance stability in Mali, we look to Prime Minister Prodi, as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, to lead this critical work in the wider region. The United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel must address the problems of fragility, poverty and insecurity comprehensively and with urgency. Only with such leadership will we be able to build stability and prosperity for all in the Sahel.

Since February this year, the United Kingdom has committed over $90 million in humanitarian assistance to respond to the current crisis, which will reach at least 1.6 million people in need. But we know that such assistance can provide only short-term relief. Together, we must help the region to build resilience to the shocks of scarcity, climate change, population growth and food insecurity, and lay the foundations for long-term development. The United Nations integrated strategy must the show the way, and I welcome Prime Minister Prodi's insistence that this be action-oriented, not just fine words.

To ensure the sustainability of that development, we must work with our partners in the region to build institutions of good governance and stability. In that way, we can, together, fight terrorism and organized crime and build a better future for the people of the region. The United Kingdom believes that there is an urgent need for action to build stability and resilience and fight the scourge of terrorism and organized crime. We look forward to a strengthened, comprehensive and coordinated approach, and we back the United Nations,

through Special Envoy Prodi, working with regional partners to achieve this.

We have a common analysis and we have a common political will. We are all already united, so now is the time to grasp the opportunity that unity gives us and to deliver our vision.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): Let me commence by expressing our gratitude to the Moroccan presidency of the Security Council for having convened this important meeting to discuss the threats to international peace and security posed by the multifaceted and interlinked challenges that the countries of the Sahel region are facing. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Special Envoy Mr. Romano Prodi, and the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Antonio Guterres, for their informative briefings. I also thank Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte D'Ivoire Mr. Charles Koffi Diby for his insightful intervention on behalf of Economic Community of West African States. The high level of representation at today's meeting attests to the unwavering commitment of the United Nations, the regional and subregional organizations and the States concerned to finding durable solutions to the problems in the Sahel region.

For years, the Sahel region has been plagued by complex political, security, socioeconomic and humanitarian challenges. The recent wave of violence in the region and its vicinity, accompanied by infiltration by armed groups, terrorists and criminal networks into the region, an influx of weaponry and an upsurge in radical separatist activities, have further undermined the security and stability of the Sahel States and have exacerbated the trials of the already harsh lives of their peoples. In addressing the situation in the region, the international community must remain strongly committed to respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of the countries of the Sahel.

The crisis in Mali, including its negative implications for the region and beyond, is a matter of grave concern. We concur with the Secretary-General that Mali's complex crisis requires a multifaceted and integrated response, in which the political, security, humanitarian and human rights dimensions are well coordinated and mutually reinforcing. Azerbaijan supports the ongoing national, subregional, regional and international efforts to promote national reconciliation and fully restore the constitutional order in Mali. At the same time, the situation in the north of Mali calls for urgent action and measures, including in particular those under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, to restore the territorial integrity, sovereignty and unity of the country and to dismantle the terrorist and criminal networks there.

The persistent situation of insecurity and underdevelopment in the Sahel naturally has an aggravating impact on the humanitarian situation. It is obvious that there is a need for a swift, comprehensive and consistent international approach in tackling massive displacement, health, food insecurity and malnutrition problems. A prompt response and continued assistance to the affected countries are required to address the most pressing needs of the population and to prevent a large-scale crisis in the region. In the broader context, it is crucial to effectively link humanitarian and development initiatives to ensure sustainable solutions. Support for national Governments in the region is required, with a view to enabling them to design and implement resilience-based approaches to sustainable development.

I commend the joint high-level partnership mission of the United Nations Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to the Sahel region that took place from 14 to 21 October. The mission primarily focused on gathering information on the impact of the humanitarian crises in some countries and exploring ways to respond collaboratively. Azerbaijan participated in that joint partnership mission and will continue contributing to national, regional and international humanitarian efforts and development assistance programmes in the Sahel.

One meeting will not suffice to fully reflect on and search for solutions to all problems faced by the Sahel countries. Those problems are perennial, chronic and deeply rooted. A comprehensive, integrated and radical response and consistent engagement from regional and international actors are critical. Resolution 2056 (2012) authorized the development and implementation of a United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel region. The expedient finalization of the strategy will imminently pave the way for a structural, coordinated and efficient international approach to tackle security, governance, humanitarian, human rights and development issues in the Sahel. The efforts of Mr. Prodi, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, are instrumental, indeed indispensable,

in achieving the earliest realization of the strategy and coordinating responses at all levels to the regional problems.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support of and welcome the presidential statement made earlier today (S/PRST/2012/26), which once again demonstrated the Security Council's strong determination to advance peace, security, stability and development in the Sahel region.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): The French delegation aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to thank all today's speakers for their statements. I thank Morocco for its initiative in convening today's meeting about a region that has had the attention of the Security Council for almost a year. What is happening in the Sahel represents a challenge to international peace and security. The international community has finally begun to take stock of the challenge, as was reflected by the presence of many Heads of State and Government at the high-level meeting on the Sahel convened by the Secretary-General on 26 September in New York.

Now that the Security Council is seeking solutions to the crisis in Mali and ways to support African regional organizations, we must not lose sight of the rest of the region, where there are ongoing problems of humanitarian, security, development and human rights scope that call for lasting solutions and increased coordinated responses. I would like to make three points.

The first is a simple statement. The situation in the Sahel is one of stark contrasts. While it seemed that in 2012 the humanitarian situation improved, despite the new problem of 400,000 refugees displaced by the Malian crisis, the outlook is more worrying on the security front as well as in development and wealth distribution, which is more or less uneven country by country. The region is also plagued by the well-known common scourges of food crises, underdevelopment, illiteracy, a lack of security, illicit trafficking and political instability. Every year 250,000 children die from malnutrition, but the Sahel has also become a haven for international terrorists, as well an active area for extremist movements that seek to impose their laws on societies from the north of Nigeria to the outskirts of Dakar.

The crisis in Libya made for large movements of populations, returns to countries of origin, and a wide dispersal of weapons that have benefited armed and terrorist groups. Still, those armed groups, funded by illicit trade or hostage-taking, were flourishing well before the Libyan crisis, flouting Governments of the Sahel too depleted to combat threats beyond their immediate borders. Let us not forget that in West Africa the cocaine trade for the European market has quadrupled in recent years, generating $300 million annually and reaching a new height of 2.5 million African users.

My second observation is that solutions to the challenges faced by the Sahel cannot be imposed from outside. They must derive from local and regional sources. It is their responsibility, and their initiatives are already bearing fruit. In the humanitarian realm many countries of the Sahel were able to respond promptly to the food and nutrition crisis at the end of 2011, by taking preventive measures that averted catastrophe.

Projected harvests for next year are encouraging. Our role, through the United Nations and bilaterally, is to continue to support such efforts and to help those States to break the wretched and ever shorter cycles of food crises and to finally succeed in bringing down malnutrition statistics, which are unacceptably high.

In 2012, France donated €30 million for relief of the most affected populations in the Sahel. We also support the Alliance Globale pour l'Initiative Résilience au Sahel et en Afrique de l'ouest, which was developed by the European Commission, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the countries of the Sahel to respond to humanitarian crises in the Sahel, with the goal of putting together an ongoing response mechanism for that recurring crisis.

Only integrated action that also addresses the security of the Sahel countries will create an environment conducive to sustainable economic growth that will benefit the entire population. Therefore, the proposed military operation to liberate northern Mali must include medium- and long-term measures aimed at helping those States secure their borders and combat transnational organized crime.

In that context, on 12 July the European Union launched the EUCAP Sahel mission, aimed at strengthening the national security forces of the Niger, as well as regional cooperation. That is why France has contributed more than €10 million a year

to programmes for justice and governance cooperation with Sahel countries through our bilateral file on special priority funds. Ultimately, as the Sahel occupies a transition area between West Africa and North Africa, no initiative in the region makes any sense unless the Maghreb countries are involved as full participants.

Thirdly, in that context France welcomes the appointment of Mr. Romano Prodi as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel. Given its universal nature, the United Nations is the sole entity able to bring all the States of the region together without exception, and through them the many regional structures. We believe that Mr. Prodi's first priority should be to finalize and implement the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel region that the Council has been awaiting for more than a year.

While that work is complex, the strategy has been too long in the drafting. It is now time for action. We believe that the Special Envoy's mission represents a unique opportunity to pursue internal efforts to organize the work of the agencies, funds and programmes with presences in the Sahel region so that they can all finally work to a common end. The United Nations strategy must seek to achieve the same regional objectives, while taking into account the specificities and approaches adopted by each country in the context of the strategy for the Sahel that was adopted by the European Union.

A further significant undertaking of the Special Envoy is to ensure regular coordination between the United Nations system and the other protagonists involved in the Sahel region, starting with the African Union, the core countries, the Maghreb countries, the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union and the major bilateral donors. In particular, we call for the closest cooperation between the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and the African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, President Buyoya, whose appointment bears testimony to the efforts of the African Union to bring its full weight to bear in seeking a solution to the crisis in the region. We welcome those efforts.

We thank Mr. Prodi for his initiative to convene the meeting of 7 December in Rome, which will make it possible to develop a clearer and more efficient division of labour among the various international stakeholders that are involved in the Sahel region. Mr. Prodi can count on France's support in fulfilling his mission.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Morocco for the initiative of holding today's ministerial meeting to discuss the situation in the Sahel region. I am pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over today's meeting. I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Mr. Romano Prodi, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel; and Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for their respective briefings, and Mr. Charles Koffi Diby for his statement. I welcome the presence of high-ranking representatives of regional and subregional organizations.

The Sahel region holds an important strategic position. It runs across the African continent from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Horn of Africa in the east. Peace, stability and development in the Sahel region have a direct bearing on the long-term peace and stability of the African continent. At present, the Sahel is facing a severe food crisis, and conflict in Libya and Mali have further exacerbated the humanitarian situation and added to the already heavy economic and social burdens of the countries of the region. Arms trafficking, transnational organized crime, and terrorist and extremist activities represent severe challenges to regional stability.

With a view to addressing the various challenges facing the region, I would like to make the following four points. First, an integrated strategy is important for dealing with the current situation. The various problems of the Sahel region are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, and therefore require an integrated approach. We hope that, as urged by the Security Council, the Secretary-General will broadly seek the views of the countries of the region and regional and subregional organizations in order to develop an integrated United Nations strategy as soon as possible, with clearly defined objectives and practical measures.

Secondly, the key to long-term peace and stability in the Sahel lies in resolving the fundamental problems underpinning the current situation, which arose in response to a complex series of factors, including lack of development and poverty. The international community, especially the donors and the international financial institutions, should enhance their funding and technical assistance to the countries of the region, addressing economic and social development as a priority. The priority for the time being is to tackle the current food crisis in the Sahel and to resolve the

funding gap in the humanitarian assistance, to be provided by the United Nations.

Thirdly, any effort to resolve the crisis in the Sahel must be based on full respect for the ownership of the countries and organizations of the region. The countries of the region, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States ave been working actively to address the various economic, security and humanitarian crises in the region. The international community, in its efforts to assist in the process, should fully respect the sovereignty and independence of the countries of the region in order to fully include the initiatives and plans development by regional countries and regional organizations.

Fourthly, given the complex and diverse nature of the challenges facing the Sahel region, it is important that the international community adopt a coordinated approach. The primary focus for the Council should be on threats to peace and stability in the Sahel. In addition, various United Nations agencies should work together in responding to the current crisis, based on a clear division of labour. China hopes to see synergies generated between the good offices of the United Nations and countries and organizations of the region, and supports the work of Special Envoy Prodi to that end.

At present, a solution to the Mali question brooks no delay. The international community must take swift and effective action to assist Mali, in full respect for its sovereignty, in dealing with the separatist, terroristic and extremist threats. We support the efforts of the Malian transitional authorities to promote a political process and to quickly and fully restore constitutional order and maintain national unity and territorial integrity.

China has actively supported the initiatives of African countries and regional organizations to strengthen cooperation and maintaining peace and stability on the continent. The Council should pay close attention to the call and proposal of Mali, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States concerning the deployment of an international force to Mali.

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to the situation in the Sahel and has been working actively and through various means to support the efforts of countries of the region to achieve stability and development. China has consistently provided assistance, within its capacities, to the countries of the region. In the past year, China has provided emergency food assistance to many countries of the region and strengthened cooperation efforts with the African Union and countries of the region in the fight against terrorism.

China is ready to continue to play its role in order to find an early and comprehensive solution to the current crisis in the Sahel.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): For the past 18 months, we have followed developments in the Sahel with alarm and concern. We see there an increasingly clear manifestation of a whole host of destabilizing factors — arms flows, terrorist and drug threats, separatist tendencies, severe internal conflicts and a grave humanitarian and socioeconomic situation — and they are continuing to get worse. We are especially concerned by the crisis in Mali, which has become a serious challenge for neighbouring States. It has created a credible threat to the stability and security of the entire region and far beyond. We, like other international partners, are especially alarmed by the fact that, in northern Mali, the lead role is now being played by blatantly extremist forces who are not hiding their ties to terrorist organizations, including Al-Qaida. Terrorism has become a significant factor affecting general security.

Any sustainable solution to the problem in northern Mali will be political in nature. We are encouraged by emerging signs of the start of negotiation contacts between the representatives of the transitional authorities and some groups. At the same time, an essential condition for talks must be the severing of all ties with terrorist organizations and the recognition of the territorial integrity of the country. It is our view that any military operation in the north must be seen as a last resort.

Unfortunately, in the Malian capital there are still clashes among the political forces. The basis for a settlement of the internal crisis lies in the launching of a broad national dialogue aimed at the restoration of the constitutional order. A key role belongs to the Malians themselves. It is therefore our view that the general situation in the region today is such that it is essential to step up efforts to deal with other conflicts as well.

The people of the Sahel continue to feel the consequences of the Libyan crisis, which to a large extent served as a catalyst for the current developments

in Mali. The exodus of the Touareg into the Sahel and the leakage of a huge amount of weapons has become a critical factor in the destabilization of the situation in general, and has led to the unraveling of the situation in Mali in particular. This urgent problem must continue to be the focus of our attention. To try to close our eyes to it, justifying it with the infamous political correctness, would only exacerbate the situation; we would be giving up on the search for solutions.

An absolute imperative is strict compliance with the arms embargo regime against Libya introduced by resolution 1970 (2011), which remains essential, and measures to prevent weapons flows from Libya, including man-portable air defence systems, under resolution 2017 (2011). The fact that there are supplies of chemical weapons in the country gives further urgency to these problems.

We are convinced that a vital role in dealing with these problems in the Sahel must be played by the countries themselves. At the same time, it is necessary to coordinate the efforts of regional and subregional organizations with the appropriate support from the international community. An important role in that context must be played by the United Nations. It is obvious that its experience and expertise on this issue will be required on a broad range of issues, from countering terrorism to implementing socioeconomic programmes.

In that regard, we welcome the appointment of such an eminent political figure as Romano Prod as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel.

The Russian Federation and the countries of the Sahel are united by close traditional ties of mutually advantageous bilateral and multilateral cooperation. We are prepared to continue to give our regional partners effective multifaceted assistance in areas in which they show an interest.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal): I thank the Kingdom of Morocco for taking the initiative to organize this important debate at a time when the Sahel is facing such formidable challenges, and I thank Minister El Othmani for presiding over it. I also thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Romano Prodi, Mr. António Guterres and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire for their statements. The presence here today of representatives from several organizations involved in the region further underlines the relevance of the topic for the maintenance of international peace and security in the Sahel and beyond.

Recent events in Mali have underlined the need for the international community to pay greater attention and give new priority to dealing with long-standing fragilities in the Sahel and with their consequences. We hope that the Council can soon adopt a resolution that will specifically address the situation in that country in line with what has been requested by the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The current crisis in the Sahel is historically deep-rooted, has complex and multifaceted causes, be they economic, social, political or ethnic, and therefore requires a comprehensive strategy that addresses the transnational nature of the challenges at hand, including, naturally, those of organized crime and terrorism, which also represent today a serious threat to neighbouring regions.

Indeed, we should also be aware of the fact that security issues are not restricted to the Sahel. In fact, instability in West African coastal countries might significantly contribute to the mounting insecurity in the Sahel. The increase in activities of drug traffickers and organized crime networks on the coast and their illicit financial resources do in fact fuel criminal activities and terrorism in the whole region. The effect from the neighbouring regions of the Maghreb and Europe are also evident.

Portugal has for a long time defended the regional approach to the Sahel, not just because we find the same fragilities in most countries in the region but because the challenges faced by those countries are of a transnational nature. Efforts made by individual countries are important and can be more effective if their emphasis is placed on the development of regional capacities. There are already regional action plans approved by regional organizations such as ECOWAS that should be put into practice to deal with the problems affecting the Sahel. We should also encourage viable multilateral ad hoc arrangements within Sahel countries themselves for pooling resources for border control and in combating terrorism and organized crime.

Support from outside the region is also a reality. I would mention, among others, the European Union, which is already implementing its own strategy for the Sahel.

Therefore, we believe that the United Nations regional offices — the United Nations Office to the African Union and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa — and the relevant United Nations missions in the region can have a key role to play in bringing together all the relevant actors and promoting concrete initiatives. Much is already under way, but it is important that those different initiatives be framed by a coherent strategy.

In that respect, we welcome the appointment of Mr. Romano Prodi as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel and look forward to the finalization of an integrated strategy for the region. We hope that Mr. Prodi will develop a strong working relationship with ECOWAS and with the African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, and we reiterate our full support to his endeavours.

As a coordinator of international efforts, the United Nations should take into account the perspective and potential contribution of the wider region, including that of North African countries, and thus overcome the difficulty posed by the fact that the countries affected do not belong to one single regional organization.

Some of those problems faced by Sahel countries require quick responses, as they may potentially expand beyond the region or aggravate an already very serious humanitarian and security situation, but others require long-term strategies and instruments. We think, therefore, that the United Nations strategy should clearly identify which measures may have an immediate effect — for instance on humanitarian assistance, arms proliferation, criminal networks or border control — and which ones work essentially in the long run, especially those aimed at economic recovery, youth employment, climate change and capacity-building. That will help us in understanding how the different types of measures can best be employed and combined to promote sustainable development and security in the region.

Looking at long-term measures, we believe that particular attention should be given to the issue of institution-building. As the example of Mali clearly shows, it is obvious that, without strong institutions, countries will remain vulnerable to both internal and external threats. We therefore expect the United Nations integrated strategy to provide concrete indications on how to address the issue of institution-building and what kind of measures may improve countries' resilience.

I conclude by stressing again that the international involvement in the Sahel requires coherence and complementarity of the various efforts. A coordinated and integrated approach is therefore of the essence, while building on experience, solutions and lessons learned in similar situations in other regions of the world. Such an approach will help prevent any duplication of efforts and ensure that international responses effectively address the multiple dimensions of a complex situation such as that of the Sahel.

For our part, Portugal will continue to contribute to the collective effort to find new and bold responses to a situation that extends beyond the Sahel region and affects us all.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): We join others in commending Morocco for convening today's ministerial meeting dedicated to the Sahel region. It is a timely initiative and will help maintain the international community's focus on the challenges that the region is confronting. We thank Mr. Saad-Eddine El Othmani, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Morocco, for presiding over this meeting. Pakistan enjoys close relations with all countries of the Sahel, and therefore has an abiding interest in their continued well-being.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Mr. Romano Prodi, as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres, for their very useful briefings. We also welcome the participation of the high-level representatives of the various regional organizations and United Nations entities at today's meeting.

Despite the progress made by countries in the Sahel, they continue to face serious security, humanitarian, and socioeconomic challenges. If those challenges are not addressed quickly and effectively, the gains made so far could be reversed, and there would be negative repercussions for the region's long-term stability. The region faces chronic problems of food insecurity, underdevelopment and climate change. The recent rise in organized crime has aggravated the situation.

The conflict in Libya has also added to the region's difficulties. Consequences of that conflict are still unfolding, with Mali being its first victim. Refugees from Mali have placed an additional burden on neighbouring countries that were already reeling from the impact of the prevailing drought. Terrorists and criminals who have filled the security vacuum in

northern Mali, pose a serious risk to the security of the entire region.

We have previously expressed grave concern in the Council over the rise of organized crime, including drug and weapons trafficking, and terrorism in West Africa and the Sahel. Drug trafficking in particular is a serious threat to the countries of the region because of its nexus with terrorism and its potential to fuel corruption and undermine governance. Tackling those threats demands greater regional cooperation in border management as well as in the justice and law enforcement sectors. Countries of the Sahel are all developing countries that face lack of capacity and resources. Therefore, the international community must, in the short run, provide effective assistance to the relevant countries and regional organizations. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime should also play a role in providing assistance to those countries.

Evidently, to address the challenges the region is facing, there is a need for an integrated strategy that has the support of the international community. Pakistan has supported the elaboration of a United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel region in resolution 2056 (2012). We welcome the appointment of Mr. Prodi as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Sahel and support his efforts for the development of the strategy, as well as for mobilizing resources for the region. We hope that with his support the United Nations integrated strategy will soon be finalized.

The United Nations strategy should be based on the principle of national ownership and drafted in close consultation with concerned countries. Its aims and objectives should be realistic and prioritized in order to keep a balance between immediate and long-term needs. It must focus on effective coordination among the various United Nations presences in the region, which would be crucial for its success. The strategy must also identify the resources required for its implementation. Statements made by regional representatives at today's meeting contain some valuable suggestions, which must be considered.

The situation in Mali poses a grave threat to regional stability and deserves the urgent attention of the Council. Pakistan supports efforts to restore the territorial integrity of Mali, address the threat of terrorism and respond to the humanitarian situation in the country and the Sahel region through a comprehensive approach that addresses both the political and security aspects of the crisis. The African Union joint strategic concept of operations provides a very useful basis for addressing the Malian crisis.

An integrated Sahel strategy will act as a ballast, help stem a powerful tide of extremism and spur the social and economic development of the region. The United Nations can be complimented for looking at the big picture and working on a holistic approach. We must now inject a sense of urgency to achieve our goals. In the coming days and weeks, Pakistan will assist in the efforts to develop an effective response by the Security Council to address the development and security challenges in Mali and the wider Sahel region.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): We thank the Moroccan delegation for organizing and presiding over today's important debate on the situation in the Sahel region. Mr. Othmani's presence here today demonstrates the seriousness that the Kingdom of Morocco attaches to long-term peace and stability of that region. We would also like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, Mr. Romano Prodi, and the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres, for their briefings and welcome the Secretary-General for his participation here today.

At the same time, South Africa commends ongoing efforts by regional leaders in the Sahel, in particular the African Union and its Special Envoy, President Buyoya, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), aimed at addressing the situation in the region.

The situation in the Sahel constitutes a serious threat to security and stability on the African continent, as well as to international peace and security. That region has, over the last few months, endured enormous and complex challenges, including continued instability in some countries, increased terrorist activities, transnational criminal activities, a worsening humanitarian situation and a persistent food crisis. In that context, my delegation recognizes the interconnectedness of the challenges that the region is facing; they are complex in nature. My delegation continues to be concerned by the growing threat posed by terrorist groups and criminal elements in the region, as well as drugs, weapons and human trafficking, which are providing the financial wherewithal for their activities.

The African Union Peace and Security Council noted that those challenges had been aggravated by

developments in the Maghreb region, especially the crisis in Libya, the influx of internally displaced persons and the increase in transnational organized crimes and the proliferation of weapons. It is for that reason that the international community should work closely with the African Union, countries of the Sahel region and ECOWAS in addressing the situation.

We are also concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the region. It is reported that humanitarian agencies will require more than $800 million to respond effectively to the food security and nutrition crisis facing the region. The situation is further exacerbated by the presence of terrorist groups in northern Mali, which has prompted massive internal displacement of the population and has created over 400,000 refugees. In March, during the Peace and Security Council meeting held in Bamako, our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, committed South Africa to assisting the Governments of the Niger, Mauritania, Mali and Chad to overcome the current drought and food insecurity. So far, between September and October, South Africa has delivered more 100 tons of maize power boosts — nutrition for children. South Africa's shipments to Mali, a part of the full humanitarian support package, will be taking place within the next few weeks.

The challenges that the Sahel region is facing require a holistic and comprehensive approach from all of us. It is imperative that the international community, in collaboration with regional organizations, in particular the African Union and ECOWAS, as well as countries of the region, should work together to address the root causes of the challenges that the region is facing. However, we must remain cognizant of the reality that while the challenges the Sahel is facing demand our urgent response, they also require a long-term sustainable involvement from all of us.

Therefore, our commitment must remain unwavering. The appointment of Mr. Romano Prodi and the African Union High Representative for Mali, former President Buyoyo, provides a unique opportunity for the international community to coordinate its efforts in a manner that avoids duplication and promotes efficiency by coordinating the collective response. The meeting convened by Mr. Prodi in Rome on 7 December is most important in that regard. In is important for the Special Envoy to urgently finalize the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, encompassing development, humanitarian and security dimensions. That will ensure that the United Nations is focusing on the challenges facing the region.

Allow me to turn to the situation in Mali, which is the most urgent matter requiring our immediate attention. South Africa strongly believes that the challenges facing Mali are related to the overall situation in the Sahel region. We are particularly concerned about the ongoing insecurity in the north of Mali and the threat that the situation poses to the security of neighbouring countries and beyond.

The situation in Mali requires an urgent response from the international community and the Council. In that regard, South Africa fully supports the request by the African Union and ECOWAS for the deployment of the African-led international support mission in Mali to assist the Malian forces to regain control of the north. The Security Council should authorize the deployment of that mission under Chapter VII, as well as provide a United Nations logistical support package. That is urgent. The Council must be seen as united in supporting Malian forces to recapture the north.

To conclude, South Africa wishes to reiterate that if the situation is left unattended, it will lead to a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation and further human rights violations. If left unchecked, the situation in the Sahel threatens to spread and affect other countries in the region and beyond, as well as to undermine international peace and security. Today's discussion and presidential statement (S/PRST/2012/26) are important for highlighting those challenges. Our discussion should be followed by concrete action. We welcome the words of Mr. Prodi in that regard — including support for regional initiatives such as speedily authorizing the deployment of the African-led international support mission.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, at the outset, to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important meeting on the situation in the region of the Sahel. I am grateful for your personal presence in leading our discussion. I would also like to apologize on behalf of our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Harold Caballeros, who was unfortunately unable to attend, as was his intention and desire, due to scheduling conflicts. I would like in particular to express our appreciation for the concept paper that your delegation circulated (S/2012/906), which contains important ideas for organizing today's debate. I also thank the Secretary-General, the Special

Envoy for the Sahel and the High Commissioner for Refugees for their briefings. I listened with interest to the statements by the Minister from Côte d'Ivoire, speaking on behalf of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS).

The theme of today's debate could not be more relevant. In the Sahel region, a number of problems converge, including recurrent droughts with their resulting famines, intermittent plagues, extreme poverty, migration, and the internal as well as the trans-border displacement of persons. Those problems are exacerbated by other phenomena that have recently been explored in the Council in a variety of contexts with universal implications. I refer, for example, to the illegal activities associated with organized crime, and also to the consolidation of havens for terrorist organizations.

Moreover, events in the Sahel are not unrelated to the Libyan crisis of 2011, as we learned earlier this year from the report (see S/2012/42) by an assessment mission of the Secretariat. Consequently, the thematic reach of our debate covers a wide range of issues. I would like to limit my remarks to six short points.

First, a few words about Mali, which is the focus of the Council's attention when we speak of the region of the Sahel. This is where we come closest to the threshold of a threat to international peace and security. The disruption of constitutional order last March led to predictable consequences. Longstanding demands for greater autonomy by the Tuareg peoples of the north grew more pronounced, and today no less than the territorial integrity of Mali is at stake. In the governance vacuum, extremist armed forces have gained significant territory. In that manner, havens have been created where terrorist groups and criminal cartels are able to operate at will. A regime of grave human rights violations against the population has emerged, and religious and cultural monuments are being attacked, which has led to a humanitarian crisis of the first order.

All that is taking place in a broad geographical area that is today a no-man's land. In addition, given the multiple links between the countries of the Sahel, as well as of the Maghreb, the chaotic situation that reigns in northern Mali is at great risk of spreading to neighbouring countries. We therefore support a robust reaction from the Council to address that situation along the general lines of the proposal that the Secretary-General presented to us just a few days ago.

That leads to my second point, which is that, apart from its specific characteristics, the Sahel region offers a new opportunity to draw lessons from the diverse modes of partnership between the United Nations and African multilateral agencies, as countenanced by Chapter VIII of the Charter. At least so far as Mali is concerned, the earliest initiatives, as is well known, originated in the Economic Community of West African States, with the support of the African Union. As in so many other cases — Darfur, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo — partnerships were established between the United Nations and regional or subregional entities that offer important potential benefits based on the comparative advantage of each party. However, they also generate potential obstacles derived from the eternal problem of who does what, how the chain of command and control functions within a complex peacekeeping operation and who picks up the tab. In the case of Mali, we welcome that kind of partnership in principle, but without compromising the functions assigned to the Council in the Charter.

Thirdly, in the Sahel, especially northern Mali, the international community as a whole, and the countries of the region in particular, face new challenges from extremist or armed groups that use violence against innocent civilians to further their own destructive agendas. Given the size of the territory in question, there is also a threat that havens will emerge there for groups such as Al-Qaida, the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram. Preventing the establishment of havens for such groups is thus a priority, and will require the Malian Government to regain full control over its territory. We support the backing of the international community for this effort.

Fourthly, we are concerned about the reports of gross violations of the human rights of the civilians living in areas close to where extremist groups are operating. Extrajudicial executions, amputations, beatings, rape, kidnappings and the recruitment of child soldiers seem to be the order of the day in communities previously characterized by neighbourliness and tolerance. This situation has also provoked a mass exodus that is giving rise to a new humanitarian crisis just as the previous crisis, attributable to climatic conditions, was beginning to abate. In other words, humanitarian assistance remains a priority in the Sahel, and we

commend the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel, as well as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their activities in that regard.

Fifthly, another rapidly growing sector in the Sahel is that of local and transnational groups dedicated to organized crime, including trafficking in illicit drugs, arms, persons and contraband. This is a subject we discussed in February, during Togo's presidency of the Council, under the rubric of peace consolidation in West Africa (see S/PV.6723), which led to the adoption of resolution 2039 (2012). We can certainly relate to the need to combat this scourge, which requires solid international cooperation, since the countries of Central America in general, and Guatemala in particular, are dealing with the same challenge.

Lastly, given the complex and multifaceted characteristics of the situation in the Sahel, it is clear that an integrated and coordinated approach is required on the part of the entire United Nations system. We therefore eagerly await the presentation as soon as possible of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel that we requested in July, and concerning which Mr. Romano Prodi has informed us. We trust that this document, with its revisions, will provide a road map for the strategy's subsequent implementation.

For all these reasons, we also call on all international stakeholders, regional and subregional organizations, and development partners to redouble their efforts to support and assist all the countries of the Sahel.

Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri (India): Mr. President, I am delighted to see you presiding here today.

The presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Morocco and of other dignitaries clearly underscores the importance of the evolving situation in the Sahel for peace and security in the region. At the outset, I would like to thank the Moroccan delegation for having arranged today's meeting. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, his Special Envoy, Mr. Romano Prodi, and High Commissioner António Guterres for their briefings. We hope that today's deliberations will help the United Nations to address the multifaceted crisis in the Sahel in an integrated and comprehensive manner, as is mentioned in the useful concept note prepared by the Moroccan delegation (S/2012/906, annex).

The Sahel region has long faced several challenges in the political, economic and humanitarian spheres. Many countries of the region are also dealing with governance issues, due to the absence of adequate institutional capacity. Over the past year, the situation has worsened, due to the crises in the neighbourhood, as has been most acutely demonstrated by the developments in Mali. The proliferation of weapons, the activities of rebel and terrorist groups, and transnational organized crime, including illicit drug trafficking, have taken a heavy toll on the region. Apart from the political and security problems, the humanitarian situation in the region has also been aggravated by extreme climatic conditions and insufficient rainfall, which have had a negative effect on harvests. More than 18 million people in the region are suffering from severe food and nutrition crises this year.

Extremist and terrorist groups have taken advantage of the adverse political, security and humanitarian situations to consolidate their positions, particularly in northern Mali. Such groups have weakened State institutions, committed serious human rights violations, and damaged or destroyed many sites of cultural, historic and religious significance. The activities of Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram in northern Mali have turned the area into a regional hub for terrorist groups. Several countries of the region are seriously threatened by their activities. More than 400,000 people have been displaced by the fighting in northern Mali.

Clearly, the time has come for the international community to seriously address the multiple crises in the Sahel and to support the initiatives of regional and subregional organizations. Given the complexity of the challenges facing the region, the response requires a holistic approach. The United Nations should play the leading role in the process, and we appreciate the Secretary-General's initiatives, such as the high-level meeting on the Sahel in September and the appointment of the Special Envoy.

We look forward to the Secretary-General's report on an integrated strategy for the Sahel, as requested by the Security Council. We think the strategy should be developed with the full involvement of the countries of the Sahel and regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States and the Arab Maghreb Union.

In the immediate term, the priority should be stabilizing the security situation. That requires dealing

with the threats of secessionist, extremist and Al-Qaida-linked terrorist groups. Political dialogue should be pursued with those willing to renounce terrorism and lay down their arms. A secure environment will also facilitate the implementation of programmes for national reconciliation and the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

We therefore support an expeditious response from the Security Council to the request of ECOWAS and the African Union for the deployment of an African-led international support mission in Mali. The mission should be d ployed in parallel with the institution of an inclusive political process, led by the Malian authorities, to address the legitimate grievances of the people of northern Mali. We also urge the international community to redouble its efforts to meet the challenges of food insecurity in northern Mali and provide adequate resources to humanitarian agencies working in the region.

Given the expanding activities of terrorist networks and armed groups in the region, the United Nations should also assist the affected countries in strengthening the capacities of security agencies and enhancing cooperation at the regional level, so as to establish more effective border controls and combat illicit trafficking in arms and drugs and organized crime and terrorism.

The implementation of all strategies should give primacy to national ownership and the capacity-building of national institutions and respect the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the countries concerned. Along with the provision of resources, there should be better integration and coordination among the United Nations and other agencies on the ground to ensure the effective implementation of the strategy.

In conclusion, the renewed attention to the Sahel on the part of the international community is a welcome development. We expect that attention to translate into concrete action on the ground to address the challenges. India, for its part, remains committed to partnering with the countries in the region, the United Nations, the African Union and other organizations in the implementation of a United Nations-led integrated strategy for the Sahel.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): At the outset, I wish to thank the Moroccan presidency for having convened today's important meeting. Germany attaches great importance to the situation in the Sahel, and we therefore highly appreciate your timely initiative, Sir, to debate the current challenges facing the Sahel region.

Germany aligns itself with statement to be delivered later on behalf of the European Union (EU).

Let me also thank the Secretary-General for his remarks, as well as Mr. Prodi and Mr. Guterres for their very helpful briefings. Furthermore, I would like to welcome the representatives of the regional and subregional organizations, as well as the representatives of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

The situation in the Sahel was brought to the attention of the Council only at the end of last year. Yet, long-standing structural problems have been hampering the development of the region for a long time. The current crisis in Mali has highlighted the challenges and threats to peace and security that the Sahel is facing. Tackling those highly complex challenges includes strengthening the fight against terrorism, transnational organized crime and proliferation; providing an immediate responses to the humanitarian crisis; as well as promoting socioeconomic development, good governance, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. From a long-term perspective, it also includes finding responses to environmental challenges caused by, among other things, climate change.

Allow me, Sir, to elaborate on some of those challenges. The rise of terrorism and the establishment of a safe haven and training ground for terrorists in the region are matters of paramount concern and require immediate attention and action. In that context, Germany would like to reiterate its support for the listing of the relevant terrorist groups and their affiliates under the Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee regime.

The ongoing proliferation of arms in the region is equally worrying. The international community and established regional mechanisms should continue to support national efforts in the region to combat proliferation. Germany has been carrying out projects on arms control, both bilaterally and within the framework of the EU border management programme, and has always advocated for a comprehensive approach to combating the destabilizing accumulation of and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. We are currently funding various projects on stockpiles management and security, as well as on demobilization and integration in various African countries.

Climate change and its adverse effects represent another serious challenge to stability and peace in the Sahel region. So far, that aspect has been neglected and needs, without any doubt, greater attention. Besides security, development and environmental issues, the humanitarian situation in the Sahel region remains of great concern and calls for immediate action. The international community needs to urgently step up its assistance. Since the end of 2011, Germany has pledged $80 million to date.

Let me also address some possible ways of tackling the challenges in the Sahel. First, the importance of capacity-building and institution-building cannot be stressed enough. Those elements are key to enabling functioning State institutions so as not only to adequately address national challenges individually but also to strengthen their cooperation with neighbours effectively as part of joint strategies and programmes. In that regard, we would also like to underline the importance of support through subregional and regional organizations and the United Nations. My country remains active in supporting a number of capacity-building projects, such as providing technical assistance within the framework of the Customs Data Project or in the context of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Global Container Programme.

We would also like to recall, in that respect, the establishment of the West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use earlier this year, a novelty in the region. The Centre is designed to respond to climate change and preserve sustainable livelihoods in the region.

Secondly, I wish to underline the importance of improving national, international and multinational cooperation and coordination, including with the European Union and its integrated Strategy for Development and Security in the Sahel. The EU Sahel Strategy has already been translated into concrete action, and I would therefore strongly encourage close coordination and collaboration between the United Nations and the EU in order to create synergies during the development of the United Nations Sahel strategy.

Finally, we all agree on the need for a comprehensive overarching approach, which we hope to see in the United Nations Sahel strategy. The high-level meeting on the Sahel in September gave us a first glimpse of the outline of the strategy, and we welcome the meeting of the Special Envoys for the Sahel last week in Rome under the guidance of Mr. Prodi as a further step towards the resolution of the multiple crises in the Sahel region.

At this point, I would like to thank the Mr. Prodi for his efforts and assure him of my Government's full support to his endeavours.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the African Union.

Mr. António (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Council and you, Sir, for having put the question of the Sahel on the agenda. I would like to welcome the presence among us and the participation of the persons who have spoken today. I would like to thank in particular Mr. Romano Prodi, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, and Mr. António Guterres, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The present debate comes in the wake of the discussions held by the Council some days ago on Mali, as it is true that there can be no lasting solution to the crisis in Mali without a comprehensive approach to the multidimensional challenges facing the Sahel region. The strategic concept for resolving the Malian crisis includes a range of measures devoted to the situation in the Sahel region. As we all know, the Sahel region is facing a number of challenges linked to terrorism, transnational organized crime, the illicit proliferation of and trafficking in arms, latent armed conflicts, environmental degradation, climate change, food insecurity and a grave nutrition crisis. Those problems have been exacerbated by the Libyan crisis, in particular as a result of the influx of hundreds of thousands of returnees and the flood of arms and munitions coming from Libyan arsenals, which has provided a source of weaponry for terrorist and criminal groups in the region.

In that context, the African Union immediately condemned the attacks that were perpetrated in mid-January by armed rebels in the northern part of Mali, as we were aware that those developments could only worsen a security situation that was already precarious, create a humanitarian crisis and destabilize both Mali and the region. Our fears have proven to be justified.

In the African Union, we became aware very early on of the need to adopt a comprehensive approach that would address all the matters at hand, in particular

terrorism, armed rebellions, transnational organized crime, the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons and other weapons, food insecurity, poverty, youth unemployment, environmental deterioration and climate change, problems related to governance and chronic underdevelopment. Therefore, in December 2011, the African Union Commission, together with the United Nations, undertook a joint mission in the countries of the Sahel in order to evaluate the impact of the Libyan crisis. Subsequently, at the end of January 2012, the Commission convened consultations at the ministerial level in Addis Ababa among the countries of the region and other stakeholders in order to consider the report and recommendations issued as a result of the joint AU-United Nations mission (see S/2012/42).

In mid-March, the African Union Commission, working closely with the United Nations, convened a meeting of experts that brought together the countries of the region, the various agencies of the United Nations and international partners in order to consider the situation in the Sahel region and to develop recommendations on further actions. The meeting adopted conclusions that addressed political, security, humanitarian and development aspects. It also proposed a follow-up mechanism. Those conclusions were ratified by the ministerial meeting of the Peace and Security Council that was held in Bamako on 20 March. The Peace and Security Council requested the Commission, in cooperation with the United Nations and the other stakeholders, including the relevant regional economic communities, to take all the necessary measures in order to ensure the follow-up and the implementation of the conclusions reached in the various areas of action that had been identified, that is, the security and diplomatic aspects, humanitarian aid, food security, the reintegration of migrant workers, sustainable development and follow-up.

The Commission is endeavouring to implement those conclusions. In that context, it has decided to enhance its presence in the region by opening offices in the countries where it has not been represented and to strengthen the capacity of existing offices in the region. Furthermore, the Chairman of the African Union Commission has appointed a high representative responsible not only for Mali, but for the Sahel region as a whole, and that representative is the former President of Burundi, Mr. Pierre Buyoya.

From a more programmatic perspective, the Commission is engaged in developing a comprehensive African Union approach to support efforts made by countries of the region. In that regard, we are seeking to strengthen consistency between the activities undertaken by the various African Union entities involved in the activities and programmes operating in the Sahel region. To that end, we plan to quickly convene a meeting that brings together all the relevant deparments of the Commission, as well as the regional offices and the specialized agencies of the African Union, in order to develop a joint plan of action for peace, security and stability in the Sahel region.

When considering the situation in the Sahel region and the action that needs to be taken, we must keep in mind that in recent years the countries of the region have made sustained efforts, both individually and collectively, in order to tackle the challenges they face. In that regard, the Council should commend the core countries — Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger — as well as other examples of bilateral cooperation among those countries and the rest of the region. In the same vein, we should note with satisfaction the sustained efforts made by the Economic Community of West African States in order to promote peace, security, stability and development in the region of West Africa.

Finally, I would like to welcome the organization of a regional ministerial conference on border security, under the aegis of the Libyan Government, held in Tripoli in March. Ultimately, we must also acknowledge the contribution that is being made as an intrinsic part of the mandates of other relevant regional organizations, namely, the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States and the North Africa Regional Capability. International actions should therefore focus on supporting efforts made by countries of the region and make them more effective. We in the African Union express the hope that this meeting will help set a milestone in that regard.

I would like to use this opportunity to draw attention to an issue of great concern both for the region and for the African Union, namely, the issue of the payment of ransoms for the release of hostages. This has become a significant source of funding that enables terrorist groups to gain the support of local populations, acquire the necessary logistics and infrastructure and recruit new elements, in addition to the resulting criminalization of local economies. In that connection, I wish to reiterate the urgent call of the African Union to the Security Council to adopt a resolution prohibiting the payment of ransoms to terrorist groups.

For our part, we shall spare no effort to contribute towards a rapid resolution of the Malian crisis based on the relevant decisions adopted by the Peace and Security Council and shall work towards the stabilization and development of the Sahel region, in support of the efforts made by the countries concerned and in close cooperation with the United Nations and other international partners.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. O'Sullivan.

Mr. O'Sullivan (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to thank the Moroccan presidency of the Security Council for organizing this important debate. I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for having invited the European Union (EU) to participate today. High Representative Catherine Ashton is currently presiding over the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council. Unfortunately, therefore, she could not participate in this meeting, but I am speaking on her behalf. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his statement; his Special Envoy for the Sahel, President Prodi, with whom I had the honour to work very closely in other circumstances; and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres.

(*spoke in English*)

Today's ministerial debate is a timely and a necessary initiative. The European Union is extremely concerned about the prevailing situation in the Sahel, and in Mali in particular. That situation requires urgent, coordinated and determined action by all those concerned in Mali and in the region, with the support of a united international community.

The Sahel is suffering not only a humanitarian crisis, but also from the fallout from the conflict in the north of Mali and the political crisis in the south. Time is playing in favour of terrorist and criminal groups in the north, who pose a threat to the entire region and beyond. They are already perpetrating serious human rights violations in Mali, for which they must be held responsible.

The crises in Mali and the Sahel are interconnected. Only a durable solution to the political and security crisis in Mali will allow lasting peace and development throughout the Sahel. However, lasting peace in Mali will not be achieved if Sahel-wide issues are not addressed.

We believe, like many members of the Council, that a truly comprehensive approach is therefore needed. We encourage the United Nations to finalize and implement a United Nations integrated strategy under the leadership of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy.

Since 2010, in close coordination with the Governments of Mali, the Niger and Mauritania, the EU has been shaping and then implementing its Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel. The objective is to promote simultaneously security, good governance and development at local, national and regional levels. The role of all neighbouring countries, including States of the Maghreb, is recognized in the EU Strategy.

In the current circumstances, the EU is committed to making special efforts on the security front. The new EU mission EUCAP Sahel was launched in July to train the internal security forces of the Niger and to reinforce regional coordination with Mali and Mauritania in order to tackle criminal activities, including drug trafficking and terrorism.

The EU is also committed to addressing the official request of the Government of Mali to help modernize and train the Malian defence forces, under legitimate civilian control. That future EU training mission, which should normally be approved at the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs today, should also address the need to help restore the chain of command and generate a credible leverage on the use of force, with due respect for international humanitarian law. That EU engagement is part of the global support for the restoration of State authority and for political transition, reunification and stability in Mali.

To complement the Malian defence forces, an African-led international support mission in Mali has a significant role to play, not alone but rather within and subject to a comprehensive political framework and a coordinated approach by neighbouring countries. We await the Security Council's conclusions on the African Union proposal. We will then assess what we can provide to it.

We are conscious that the task facing Governments in the Sahel region is enormous and that international support is therefore essential. As in all other crisis situations, it is equally critical that we, the international community, all act in close coordination. The United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States all have crucial

roles to play in achieving those goals. I would like to emphasize that the EU will work closely with all of them to that end.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*). I now give the floor to the representative of Chad.

Mr. Allam-mi (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would like to express to Minister El Othmani Chad's warmest congratulations on his great country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month and for having chosen for its agenda the important issue of peace and security in Africa, particularly in the Sahel region. That is the focus of international events, owing to the crisis that has raged for a short while now in Mali.

Before continuing my statement of behalf of the Chairman of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), a post held by my country, I would like to convey to you, Mr. President, and to all Council members, the regrets of the Chadian Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration for not being here today. He would very much have liked to attend this important meeting personally but had to remain in the country for a high-level visit to N'Djamena by our Libyan brothers and neighbours, with whom we jointly secure and develop a large part of the Sahelo-Saharan area. In other words, there is a link between our concern today and that visit.

For approximately a decade, the Sahel has been a transit area for all kinds of traffickers — in human beings, drugs, cigarettes, arms and so on. The immense size of the Sahel, the porous State borders and the weakness of States in monitoring borders have allowed all those traffickers to operate undisturbed, particularly as they have managed to join forces with a part of the local populations in that highly lucrative business. The Libyan crisis, and the flight of hundreds of combatants in the Libyan army who were originally from the area and who brought with them weapons, equipment and money, have spread the phenomenon and transformed the Sahel into a vast safe haven, where certain groups have even wanted to build an independent State.

Separated from Libya by a long desert and a mountainous border, Chad has always guarded against its territory being used as a transit area. On two occasions, mafia and terrorist groups, including that of the Algerian Abdul Kadir Al Para, known as the One-Eyed Man, have been arrested. More recently, since the Libyan crisis began, the Chadian Government has taken measures to secure its border, thereby stopping any infiltration of troops or weapons.

This is the place to recall that there is no development without security. That is true for the Sahel. The countries of the region, supported by the international community, must therefore seek and agree on better coordination of their fight against terrorist and criminal armed groups of all kinds rampant there. But eradicating insecurity is not enough in itself to stabilize the Sahel without an extensive development programme, since the Sahel is prone to drought and desertification. Famine is also endemic. Grazing land for flocks is becoming scarce and agriculture lacks irrigation. Lands are lost every year. Flocks are decimated, and those who raise them are ruined and reduced to begging.

The international community must therefore redouble its efforts to increase its development assistance to the Sahel region by building infrastructure — a very ambitious programme of roads, clinics, schools, tourist sites and airports — so as to make the cities, wadis and palm groves vibale. In short, axes of development that can stabilize the population and improve their living conditions must be established.

CEN-SAD was to play that role following its establishment by the Sahelo-Sahara countries. However, the Council will agree that that role has been deflected. An extraordinary summit, planned for January 2013 in N'Djamena, should review the charter for CEN-SAD's establishment to refocus its objectives on the development and security of the Sahelo-Sahara region. We welcome the involvement of Morocco in that restructuring, which hosted the Executive Council meeting and has proposed hosting another summit.

With regard to events in Mali, Chad believes that the north of that brotherly country, just like the Sahel region, is in the process of becoming a true and solid rear base for terrorist and extremist operations of all kinds. Meanwhile, the international community is unable to speak in one voice and contents itself with minimal compromises. Compromise is insufficient to concretely, urgently and effectively deal with the challenges weighing upon the subregion, the entire African continent and beyond. The more time that passes, the more that base will strengthen and the more difficult it will be to take.

With regard to possible African or international military intervention in northern Mali, Chad will, as its position of principle, do its part when the time comes.

However, while reiterating its solidarity with the Malian people, Chad will adopt a definitive position when the United Nations speaks with one voice together with the Malians, the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union. Chad believes that it is urgent to provide assistance to the Malian population, which is subjected to the abuses of armed groups, and to put an end to a situation that threatens international peace and security.

Before I conclude, allow me to wonder if it is appropriate to talk about a north-south opposition in Mali. Besides the problems posed by a fringe of the Tuareg minority, is there also a north-south issue in Mali? In Mali — a country that was exemplary until quite recently, where there was good governance and no population seemed to be marginalized — is it right to see the situation in terms of a conflict between north and south?

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Mrs. Mendili.

Mrs. Mendili (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express our deep appreciation for the invitation to the secretariat of the Arab Maghreb Union to participate in today's Security Council meeting, held under the presidency of Morocco, which is one of the founding States of the Union. I take this opportunity to note Morocco's intensive efforts to maintain peace and security in the world. I am honoured to express our deep appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his ongoing efforts to lay firm foundations for security in the Sahelo-Saharan region. I would also like to express our good wishes to Mr. Romano Prodi, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel. We wish him every success in his efforts to promote security and stability in the region.

This meeting is being held under exceptional and sensitive circumstances, because the various developments in the Sahel and the Sahara, which constitute a security belt for the Maghreb and Africa as a whole, are a great challenge. That is especially true of the crisis in Mali and the deep repercussions thereof, which are no longer limited to the West African States but are spreading throughout Africa, in terms both of security and stability and of development.

The strategic location of the Union States for Africa and Europe, and their ties to the Sahel and the Sahara at the geographic and cultural levels, make us well aware of the historical importance and dangerous repercussions of any developments in that region and the threat they pose to security. That is confirmed by the transnational and transcontinental challenges we face. It comes as no surprise that armed violence has erupted at a sensitive time when economic, environmental and food security crises are rampant worldwide. Events have proven that the armed groups and rebel movements involved are multidimensional and pose a common threat to our area.

The Al-Qaida network, which is rampant in those States, recruits the youth of the Maghreb area into its ranks, and it is clear that our collective responsibility today lies in refuting the reference points and conceptual framework of those groups by immunizing our youth with a correct concept of our civilization, history and religion, especially since the countries of the Arab Maghreb and those of the Sahel and the Sahara have for centuries been linked by a culture that has spread the values of Islam and the principle of tolerance — a foundation of our religion.

The developments in our region and the repercussions of certain events have made the area an easy channel for drug and human trafficking. They have also opened new networks and routes for smuggling arms and other dangerous materials and made it easy to cross international borders, which are difficult to fully monitor. The best evidence of that is the huge quantity of arms that have been smuggled from nearby areas, the consequences of which could shake the very foundation of all that has been achieved so far in establishing democratic systems of governance. That calls for a firm stance and systematic behaviour that is based on our common interest in further coordination in order to promote security, stability and development in our societies.

We support and express our deep appreciation for United Nations efforts to establish security and stability in Mali through a political approach. However, we believe that it might also be very useful to support those efforts through campaigns to collect the weapons that are so plentiful in the area, in cooperation with relevant United Nations organizations.

There are strong and reciprocal ties among armed groups, criminal groups, terrorist groups and organized crime, including the trafficking of drugs, arms and human beings, as well as illegal immigration and money-laundering. All of those threaten the security of the Maghreb area as well as its African and

Mediterranean environment. That was the conclusion reached by the Arab Maghreb Union's foreign ministers in a ministerial meeting that was organized to discuss the security issue. The ministers stressed the need to intensify efforts within the framework of common responsibility at the bilateral, Maghreb, regional and international levels in order to counter all threats and dangers that could destabilize the Maghreb area. They emphasized that this fight will be successful only if it adopts a preventive, integrated and coordinated approach that is part of a comprehensive strategy.

Given the magnitude of the threat and the pooling of efforts among the various cells of Al-Qaida and other criminal organizations, we have no choice but to bolster security cooperation between the Arab Maghreb Union and the Economic Community of West African States, which would help to eliminate the causes of instability and tension, with tremendous benefit to the Maghreb and African States.

The international community must establish a new reality based on common interests and an awareness that our destiny is shared. It must be approached through constructive cooperation between the United Nations and regional and international organizations in support of strategic policy- and decision-makers and in order to enhance cooperation in border management and risk analysis. We must also work on further coordination to oppose and cut off the sources for terrorism funding by focusing on human security and enhancing aid to promote sustainable development.

Enhancing regional cooperation and coordination in order to arrive at effective mechanisms and find a common position would help us to confront the root causes of the problems we are facing now. Our sole purpose must be to create peace, development and security.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Ms. Reinikka.

Ms. Reinikka: The President of the World Bank, Mr. Jim Yong Kim, is unable to be here today, but he has asked me to convey his greetings and thanks to the Council for organizing this event and for inviting the World Bank. We are committed to a strong partnership with the United Nations on the Sahel, and Mr. Kim was particularly pleased to participate in the special event on the Sahel organized on the margins of the General Assembly in September.

I wish to assure the Council of our continuing commitment to working collaboratively to address the great needs of the Sahel, where 19 million people were affected by reduced access to food following the 2011 drought. Good rains in the current agricultural season have reduced the acute need and benefited the harvest in many locations, but rains have also brought flooding that has affected 3.2 million people in West Africa and displaced 1.7 million people, mostly in Nigeria. Those challenges come on top of other chronic threats including desert locusts, rapid population growth, pre-existing high levels of child malnutrition, well over 400,000 migrants returning from Libya, and conflict. Conflict and lack of security have particularly affected the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance in northern Mali.

Being part of the Sahel, Mali is affected by climate volatility and rainfall variability in a very deep-seated way. Even in years when there is record agricultural production, many people are vulnerable to shocks because of chronic food insecurity, persistently high malnutrition, and loss of livelihood owing to a lack of economic alternatives. These shocks deeply affect human development, with shortfalls in nutrition and stimulation among the young children of today having a tragic long-term impact on their future lives and productivity as the adults of tomorrow.

The institutional and security crisis arising from the military coup in March has made an already difficult situation much worse in Mali. It has severely hampered the response to Mali's drought of 2011. Today, some 4.6 million people, of whom over 1.6 million live within the conflict-affected northern regions, are at risk of food insecurity in Mali. More than 450,000 people have fled their homes since fighting erupted, and the number of internally displaced people in Mali is estimated to be 119,000. The national gross domestic product is expected to contract by 3.1 per cent in 2012.

The World Bank is providing practical support to help vulnerable groups cope with effects of this compounded crisis. In July, we resumed existing operations in Mali in the social sectors and agriculture to help people access basic services. We are also preparing new basic education and safety nets programmes. We are working with partners to create synergies and minimize fragmentation. For example, for the Mali Safety Nets Project, we are working very closely with UNICEF and the World Food Programme

to address the needs of specific groups, including internally displaced people.

Across the Sahel more broadly, our three-phased response — an approach we also adopted in the Horn of Africa — has ranged from providing immediate relief to planning for and investing in long-term resilience.

In the past few months, we have responded quickly through accelerated disbursements amounting to $64 million from existing World Bank operations across the Niger, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania. This has helped to support vulnerable households through cash for work, recapitalizing livestock, rehabilitating small-scale irrigation, and improving access to food and health services. As a second part to our response, we have helped people to replace lost assets and to recover their livelihoods. Drawing on lessons from the Horn of Africa, we are also helping to plan for social safety nets that can be rapidly scaled up to channel additional resources in times of need. From experience in Ethiopia and other countries, we know that robust social protection systems can make a major difference, preventing shocks from escalating into crises.

We are also helping to build resilient livelihoods in the long-term. Investments in transformative multi-use water infrastructure, such as the Kandadji program in the Niger, will help people to sustain agricultural production and remain resilient to crisis in future. These large-scale investments need to be accompanied by scaled-up, climate-smart agricultural practices. They are also complemented by our ongoing support for health and nutrition, as well as for education and skills to help diversify livelihoods.

The Bank's engagement in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa also provides a springboard for addressing the broader drylands agenda, which requires the integration of resilience as a key theme of development.

Food security in the Sahel can also be significantly improved by measures to free up food trade, including improving the efficiency of border crossings or even eliminating them, reducing non-tariff barriers to food trade, reinforcing supply chains, strengthening risk markets, such as offering farmers crop insurance through weather-indexed instruments, and avoiding export bans.

Strengthening regional bodies, such as the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel, is a key element of preparedness going forward. This will help to further develop early warning systems, including using new but simple technologies such as mobile phones, and consolidate useful flows of information in anticipation of crisis.

The Bank works closely with partners, in particular the regional organizations the Economic Community of West African States, the West African Economic and Monetary Union and the African Union-New Partnership for Africa's Development, as well as multilateral and bilateral agencies, including in particular the European Union, the African Development Bank and the Agence Française de Développement. Working through such partnerships, the World Bank is bringing knowledge and financing to the table, relying on existing instruments and reallocation of funds for rapid action, as well as investing in medium-term recovery and long-term resilience.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Mr. Ouédraogo.

Mr. Ouédraogo (*spoke in French*): It is my honour to speak on behalf of the President of the African Development Bank, Mr. Donald Kaberuka. Allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for your kind invitation to the African Development Bank to participate in this ministerial debate on the Sahel region. We take that invitation as an expression of the devotion of your country, the Kingdom of Morocco, to peace, security and development throughout the African continent. We commend and thank you.

Allow me also to welcome the endeavours of the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to resolve issues of peace, security and stability throughout the world, and particularly in Africa. In that context, we note our support for the appointment of Mr. Romano Prodi as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel. We wish above all to assure Mr. Prodi that the African Development Bank will stand by him as he carries out his mission.

In participating here today, the African Development Bank offers its support for the countries of the Sahel region, most of which are founding members of the Bank. However, we also express our support and availability for joint efforts to resolve the prevailing situation in the Sahel region. For all too long, that vast territory, stretching from Cape Verde to the Horn of Africa, has been beset by recurrent conflicts of variable natures and intensity. Too often, those tensions have

generated religious fundamentalism, rampant banditry, trafficking of all sorts, especially in drugs, as well as the taking of hostages.

Other consequences include the weakening of States and vast population displacements towards neighbouring States or territories, as we are presently seeing in Mali. It is therefore extremely urgent to act — and to act together — in order to mitigate the situation, which risks becoming a dangerous spiral capable of irreparably weakening the entire region and neighbouring areas and leading to an unacceptable debacle. That is why the Bank welcomes this ministerial debate and supports the vision of deploying a comprehensive integrated strategy for the Sahel.

For over a year now, we have undertaken efforts, in the framework of our mandate, with the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program on a series of programmes involving several countries, including Senegal, the Gambia and the Niger, at a total cost of $115 million. Those programmes have allowed us to mobilize larger sums than the Bank could raise alone in order to achieve the anticipated results, which are significant. Other projects are planned for Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Benin and Côte d'Ivoire.

We also hope to ensure that the Sahel becomes an area for development, because if development efforts do not receive support, the region will be exposed to certain threats with which we are familiar, including the recurrent droughts that are becoming increasingly frequent as a result of climate change.

Some of the Bank's efforts have been undertaken under the auspices of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) with a view to boosting the overall resilience of all the economies of the Sahel. We are implementing a major $500-million programme together in order to promote such resilience. Consultations are under way with the States members of the CILSS and their partners involved in agriculture, social protection and humanitarian aid. When I speak of partners, I am referring in particular to the European Union, the Islamic Development Bank, the World Bank and the United Nations.

The main pillars of our initiative are promoting production, processing and marketing infrastructure; enhancing capacity-building to enable interventions by public, private and community institutions in the agricultural sector; improving production and the productivity of the agriculture, livestock, forestry and fishing sectors; and promoting regional trade and integration. This initiative will extend over a period of 10 years, and we hope that its initial phase will start in 2014.

Other efforts have been undertaken pursuant to our vision for general resilience in the Sahel, together with the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Niger Basin Authority and the Mano River Union. To that end, we are focusing our efforts on strengthening agricultural and regional infrastructure to allow us to open up the region.

Two weeks ago, we welcomed Mr. Gressly, United Nations Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel. We discussed enhancing the complementarities between the activities of the African Development Bank and the United Nations system, and we found that there are areas where we can enhance such complementarities. The Bank's work is focused on medium- and long-term development and on creating conditions to entrench and intensify development. The United Nations has a mandate geared more towards providing emergency aid, in particular humanitarian assistance.

In the context of our agricultural infrastructure policy, we have launched programmes to improve water management. Twenty projects are currently being implemented, at a cost of more than $500 million. They include 13 projects that are dedicated specifically to managing water for agriculture and livestock breeding, covering over 30,000 hectares at a cost of $225 million. In order to address the critical drought situation that has recently affected Chad, Senegal, the Gambia, Mauritania and Mali, the Bank has mobilized emergency aid of over $4.7 million.

The Bank believes that the idea of agricultural infrastructure can also be applied to efforts to open up the region and to support governance and regional integration. Our activities seek to ensure that the overall resilience of the Sahel economies enables them to tackle any situation, thereby buttressing them and preventing them from becoming even more vulnerable. Regional expansion is a good example of this.

The efforts undertaken in recent years have demonstrated that regional and national markets have become more fluid. Agricultural surplus can be sold to other regions because of this expansion, but we realize that the existing network is not enough. We noted with regret that, in 2011, it was cheaper for Senegal to import onions from the Netherlands than from the Niger, next

door, which had a surplus that it was not able to sell. So the Bank decided to continue to fund the road transportation sector, with a particular emphasis on inter-State corridors. In 2013, we will be undertaking a substantive project on the missing links in two corridors, N'Djamena/Niamey and the trans-Saharan route between Lagos and Algiers.

Regarding the burning issue of Mali, which is of great concern to us, we recall that less than a year ago that country was seen as an example to be followed in every way. Following the sudden deterioration of affairs, the Bank would like to place on the record its full willingness to join the transitional national authorities, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and the United Nations in seeking ways and means to achieve a final resolution to the multidimensional crisis there, which has lasted for too long. In September, we cancelled the measures to suspend our operations that were put in place in March. For that reason, some projects have already been resumed.

We are wrapping up our discussions with the transitional Government on implementing other programmes as soon as conditions allow, which we hope will be very soon. I am thinking in particular here of budgetary support and the case of a programme supported by the International Monetary Fund that would enhance public services. I would also mention projects that have a direct impact on populations, such as the provision of drinking water to Bamako, which is in an advanced stage, and other largely agricultural projects, which will contribute to the resilience of the country.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Gokcen.

Mr. Gokcen: First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Kingdom of Morocco for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also wish to convey the gratitude of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Secretary General İhsanoğlu for the initiative of Saad-Eddine El Othmani to organize this important meeting and for inviting the OIC. The Secretary General apologizes for not being able to attend personally. However, I have the honour to read out his statement:

> "We are deeply concerned at the prevailing situation in the Sahel region, particularly in Mali, and seek to resolve the crisis through negotiation and discussion. From the very beginning, the OIC made repeated calls to the different parties involved in the crisis in Mali to shun the path of violence and settle their differences through dialogue and negotiations. Furthermore, the OIC also supported the initiative of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and other regional and international organizations aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the crisis in Mali and the Sahel region.
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> "The fourth Extraordinary Islamic Summit, held in Mecca Al-Mukarramah on 14 and 15 August 2012, discussed the situation in Mali and the Sahel and expressed its deep concern over the developments in that region. The leaders of the member States were concerned with the resurgence of terrorist acts fuelled by organized transnational crime, notably arms and drug trafficking, which threatens the peace, stability and socioeconomic development of the Sahel countries, particularly Mali.
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> "The OIC summit reiterated its support for the maintenance of the territorial integrity, national unity and sovereignty of the Republic of Mali. In that context, it firmly condemned the attempts by armed terrorist groups, which violate the territorial integrity of that country. The summit also reiterated its full solidarity with the transitional National Unity Government and urged all member States to provide the needed support and assistance to help it achieve its objectives.
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> "The Conference also expressed deep concern over the humanitarian tragedy in Mali and the Sahel region and mandated the Secretary General of the OIC to take necessary measures to mobilize the resources needed to overcome the difficulties confronting the hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced people in Mali and its neighbouring countries. It strongly condemned the atrocities perpetrated by terrorist groups against unarmed civilians and the destruction of sites classified by UNESCO as world cultural heritage, especially in Timbuktu. It applauded and encouraged the ECOWAS mediation and supported the current efforts of the field countries — Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger — the African Union, the United Nations and Morocco to help Mali restore its territorial integrity and stability.

"More recently, the thirty-ninth session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Djibouti from 15 to 17 November 2012, also discussed the situation in Mali and the Sahel and reaffirmed its principled position of safeguarding the unity of the Republic of Mali as well as its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Council strongly condemned the armed groups' actions threatening the safety of the country, renewed its total solidarity with the Sahel countries in combating all forms of insecurity and destabilization, and supported the peace initiative sponsored by ECOWAS and the African Union.

"We appreciate the important role being played by His Excellency Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, in his capacity as the ECOWAS mediator on the crisis in Mali and reiterate our continued support for his mediation efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in that country within the framework of preserving its national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We also support the efforts of His Excellency Mr. Romano Prodi, Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Sahel.

"In order to support all those efforts in a coordinated manner, the OIC intends to appoint a special envoy for Mali and the Sahel. The overall mandate of the OIC special envoy for Mali and the Sahel would be to contribute to the ongoing efforts of regional and international organizations to find a peaceful solution in Mali and the region as a whole.

"Terrorism and organized crime should be forcefully rejected, particularly when attempts are made to link those activities with Islam. All parties to the conflict should seriously engage in the ongoing Burkina Faso-led mediation efforts, which seek to find a peaceful settlement. We believe that a partnership among local and international Governments, institutions and civil society will provide an all-inclusive setting for peaceful dialogue and negotiation. Creation of a broad-based coalition of local forces against non-indigenous Al-Qaida affiliates in the region is necessary.

"After the joint mission to Syria in March 2012, the humanitarian partnership mission to Africa's Sahel region was the second partnership this year between the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Humanitarian Department of the OIC. OIC and OCHA officials jointly led a high-level mission to Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger from 15 to 21 October 2012. In an innovation, representatives of Azerbaijan, Brunei Darussalam, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, the African Union, ECOWAS, the Islamic Development Bank, Direct Aid, the International Islamic Charitable Organization and the Red Crescent agencies of the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Turkey participated in the joint mission. The objective was to raise awareness of the humanitarian crises in the Sahel region and to highlight the role of the multilateral humanitarian system in supporting the national responses of the three countries visited. In many cases, humanitarian efforts can no longer stand alone if the progress in humanitarian field is not sustained by stable development within the region. In the Sahel, there is also a need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing security, governance, development and humanitarian needs.

"Finally, I wish to remind all members of the larger international community that we all share the responsibility of acting collectively in order to help the population of Mali and the Sahel region to live in peace, security, stability and sustained development. I therefore call upon the international community to work in a more active and coordinated manner to put pressure on all parties to end the crisis immediately and restore peace and stability in Mali and the region. The OIC General Secretariat, member States and OIC subsidiary and specialized organs such as the Islamic Development Bank, the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, the Islamic Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization and International Islamic Jurisprudence Academy stand ready to further support the efforts of the international community."

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.